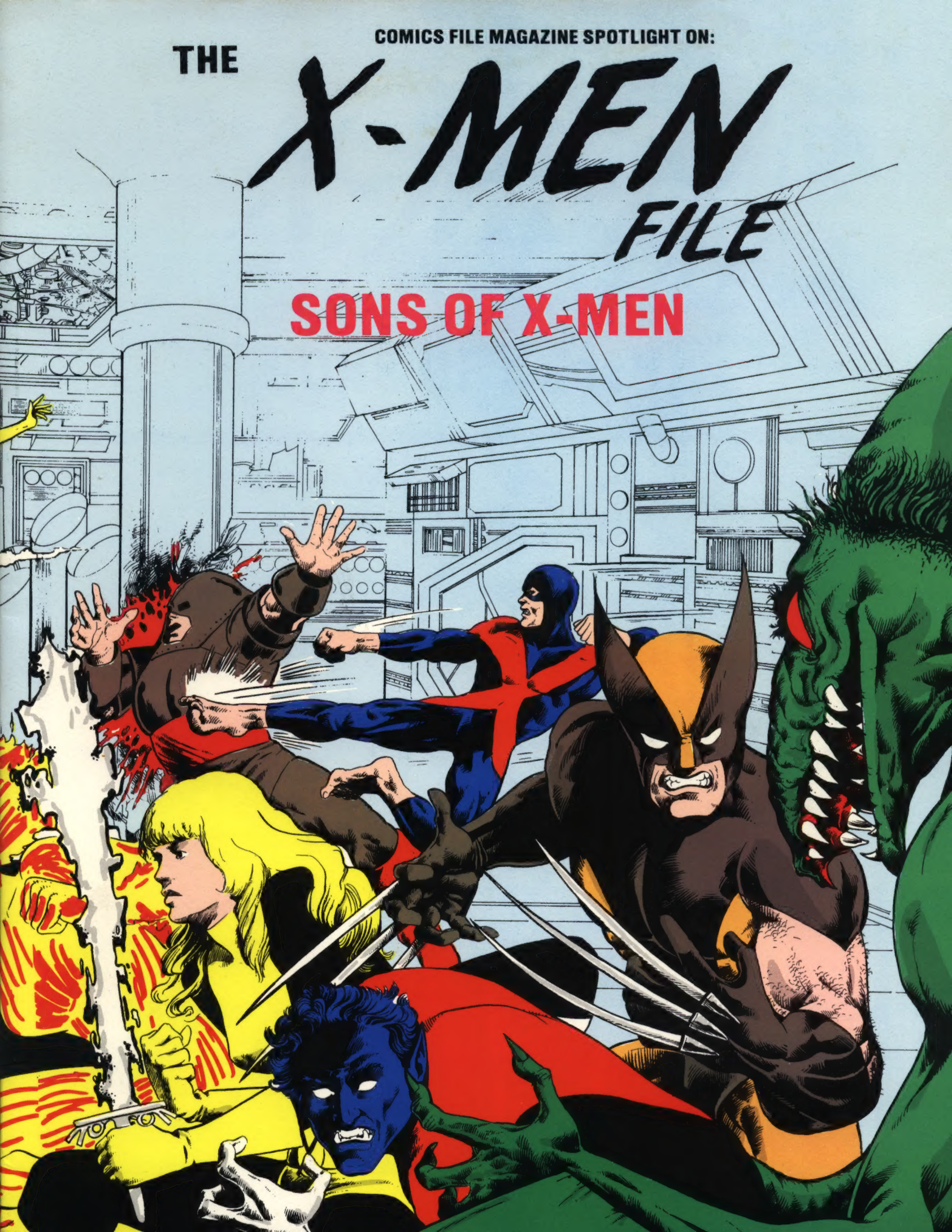
COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

THE X-MEN FILE

SONS OF X-MEN



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COMIC FILES MAGAZINE SERIES EDITED BY HAL SCHUSTER

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COMICS FILE MAGAZINE NUMBER FOUR

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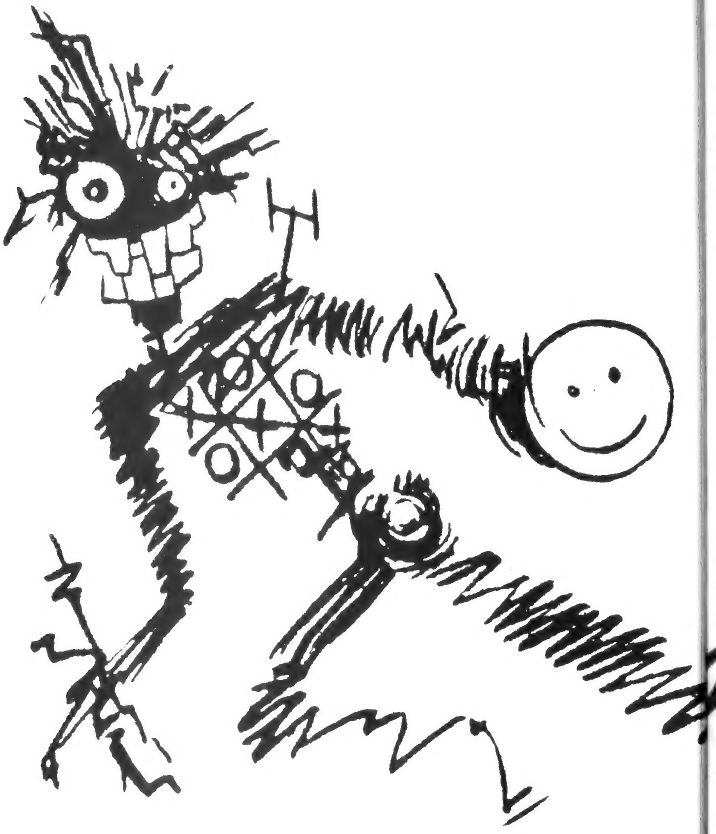
COMICS FILE MAGAZINE is published to provide a historical record of that phase of American popular culture known as comic books. If this book helps to preserve the record of the many accomplishments of the talented creators working in that field, for whatever company, then it will have admirably served the purpose for which it was created.

DEDICATED TO STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY—THEY STARTED IT ALL!



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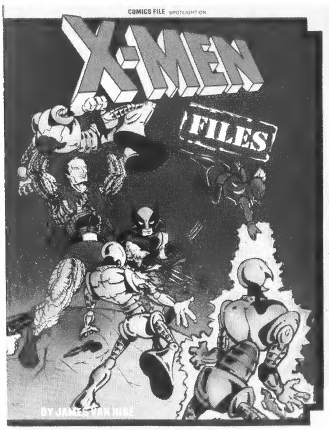
THE STRANGEST SUPER-HEROES OF ALL!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
1 SEPT IND
the X-MEN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP 12¢
DON'T MISS THIS FABULOUS FIRST ISSUE!
IN THIS SENSATIONAL FANTASTIC FOUR STYLE!
X-MEN VERSUS MAGNETO EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL SUPER VILLAIN!!



INTRODUCTION

Mutant...Mutant...who's got the Mutant. It almost seems like some sort of game. Who can most quickly put out the most team books with mutant and mutant-like—clones, test tube babies, etc.—the quickest. The comic book racks are quickly jamming with them. X-coded and otherwise they are prolific at virtually every comic book publishing house. Even Marvel copies off themselves. There are X-Men spin-off books galore—almost as many as there once were super books when the Man of Steel was in his stride. Even the New Universe has at least one X-Men style team that fails to pay tribute to the original.

It is hard to believe that the X-Men that was created with the birth of the Marvel Universe 25 years ago failed and was relegated to a mere reprint series due to lack of fan interest. That original team too is back once again, although they have lost their original name and now merely exist as a factor in the mutant universe.

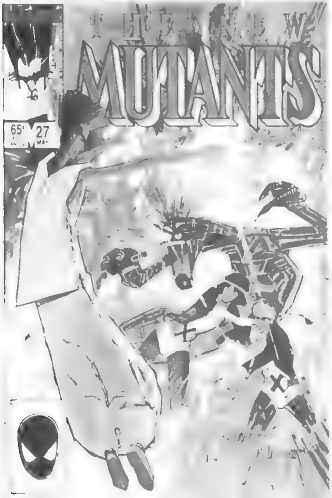
And there are still more mutant teams on the horizon as you will learn in this volume. In fact, the pages of this book are just chockful of information about your favorite nuclear spawned heroes. First there is the obligatory history of the parent team, the one that started it all. That is followed by a fascinating insight into the talented Chris Claremont, the father of the mutant revolution—although as he points out, he wasn't the creator of the team that started the ball spinning—and he gives a great deal of inside facts about how he approaches a story and what influenced the way in which he writes. Then we have a history of the junior team, the New Mutants. The New X-Men are presumably old already and so a new group is being mustered under the tutelage of the former arch-evil mutant of them all, Magneto. Then we check in with all the rest of the Mutant Universe including Fallen Angels and Firestar. And finally, the non-mutant superhero team that was born in the pages of the **X-Men**, Alpha Flight.

Altogether it's a rather tasty little volume—even if it does glow in the dark!

—HAPPY HAL

X-MEN
FORBI

MARVEL
X-FACTOR
2
LIFE AND DEATH!
X-FACTOR
TOWER!!


NEW
MUTANTS
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ANNIVERSARY
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Alpha
Flight
AVENGERS

THE ORIGINAL X-MEN

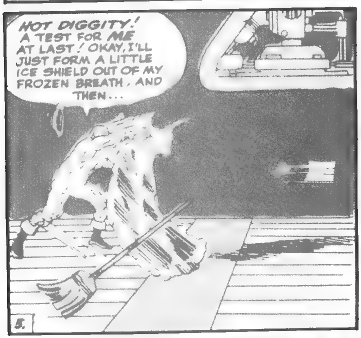
NEVER, WITHIN THE MEMORY OF MAN, WAS THERE A "CLASS" SUCH AS THIS! NEVER WAS THERE A "TEACHER" SUCH AS PROFESSOR X! AND NEVER WERE THERE "STUDENTS" SUCH AS THE
"X-MEN"
CYCLOPS PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR SIR!
THE ANGEL REPORTING, SIR!
ICEMAN RIGHT ON SCHEDULE, SIR!
THE BEAST IS HERE SIR!
Written by: STAN LEE
Drawn by: JACK KIRBY
Inked by: PAUL REINMAN
Lettered by: S. ROSEN
K-401
AND NOW PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING READING EXPERIENCES OF YOUR LIFE! FOR YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE FASCINATING, UNPREDICTABLE WORLD OF...THE X-MEN!

When you find something that works well, try it again.

That seemed to be the formula for success that Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were following in the early days of Marvel Comics. Although historical hindsight now shows us that the characters and concepts involved were, or were to become, completely different from one another, the fledgling but vocal fan element of the time made a regular habit of accusing the founders of the Marvel Age of Comics of self-plagiarization. The Hulk, they said, was merely a solo version of the Thing of *FANTASTIC FOUR* fame. Daredevil was too much like Spider-Man they claimed. The Avengers team was based on the same idea (characters from separate strips uniting) as DC's *JUSTICE LEAGUE*, in their opinions. But the strip that caught the most flak on this charge was the X-Men.

C'MON, ANGEL, LET'S TILT THE PROFESSOR'S CHAIR BACK AND MAKE HIM MORE COMFORTABLE!
WITH PLEASURE, CYCLOPS, OLD MAN! WE WANT THE PROFESSOR COMFORTABLE WHILE HE PUTS US THROUGH OUR PACES!
HEY, BEAST, COME HERE! I WANNA SHOW YOU A NEW STUNT I LEARNED WITH MY FROSTING POWER!
LEGGO MY ARM, YOU WILD WALKING ICICLE! YOU WANT ME TO DEATH??!

TA TA TA TAAAA! LOOK AT ME... I'M A SNOWMAN!
I'M GONNA GO STAND ON SOMEONE'S LAWN IF I DON'T GET SOMETHING TO DO AROUND HERE PRETTY SOON!



How strange that this super-team which is so unlike any other in comics should be, throughout its history, so often compared to other super-groups, whether published by Marvel or by its competitors.

1. ORIGINS

The X-Men's first issue appeared the same month as that of the Avengers, in July of 1963, although many fans tend to think of the X-Men as a younger team, primarily because — due to not being granted monthly status as soon as did *THE AVENGERS*, and later having been cancelled for a time — the mutant heroes have not had nearly as many issues published as their sister title.

Despite their concurrent origins, though, it was not the Avengers to which comics readers chose to compare the X-Men, but instead to Marvel's first and flagship title, *FANTASTIC FOUR*. Both teams, they wrote in to complain, had a stoic leader with astonishing mental abilities, a brutish member with great physical strength and an inhuman appearance, a brash and foolhardy teenager whose powers had to do with temperature control, and a unrequited love affair between the group's lone and (apparently) lacking-in-power female and another member. The only difference seemed to be that there were five X-Men (six, counting their mentor who took no part in the action) and only four FF members.

As we have seen in previous installments of this series, the X-Men, then and now, have a lot more in common with the FF than the Avengers for obvious reasons. The Fantastic Four are a common-origin team, deriving their powers and *reason d'etre* from a single incident, while the Avengers are a formulated team, a gathering-together of established super-stars from other books. The X-Men each appeared for the first time in comics in their premiere issue, and thus were certainly not recruits from outside comics sources, and while their unique abilities were not gained in a shared accident, as were the FF's, they had a common origin of sorts nonetheless: mutation.

This was the first and most played-up element that made the X-Men an entity separate from the other groups. The X-Men were mutants. At this point, we should examine the Marvel Comics definition of a mutant, which is slightly different from the straight science version of same. According to Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, a mutant (of which there are good and evil varieties, each with their own set of goals — which is not quite the same thing as the current Marvel custom of referring to the group as "a team of mutant super-heroes" at least once an issue) was a human born with powers or abilities not possessed by either parent. It was later established that these powers, as a general but not all-encompassing rule, were usually inherent but non-apparent at birth, maturing with the mutant person in adolescence and coming to fruition during puberty. (Necessarily so — since otherwise Scott Summers would have destroyed the hospital in which he was born the moment the doctor whacked him on the bottom, Bobby Drake would have frozen his poor mother solid in childbirth,

THANKS, PROF! I COULD USE A LITTLE HELP!
IT IS NOT FOR YOUR SAKE ALONE, LAD! A FEW MINUTES OF ROUGH-HOUSE IS GOOD FOR ALL OF YOU...TO HELP YOU LET OFF STEAM!

etc.) This was a very loose definition (under which even this author would be considered a mutant, having been born left-handed of right-handed parents), but it served to set mutant characters apart from the other Marvel super-doers, all of whom gained their powers in dramatic origin stories that happened to them as adults or near-adults. So, the X-Men were different because they were mutants. And what did that mean? For one thing, it meant that they were the superteam equivalents of Spider-Man in super-heroic society, rather than being like the Fantastic Four. Whereas the FF were national heroes who openly saved the world on a regular basis and were as famous as movie stars, the X-Men, like Spidey, were feared and distrusted as freaks. After all, you didn't have to go up in a rocket and be exposed to cosmic rays to be a mutant. Anybody could be...one of *them*! The term "witchhunt" was a familiar one in *X-MEN* stories.

The X-Men also stood apart from other teams because they...well, they stood apart, literally. Despite the all-of-a-kind uniforms of the original group and their common cause as mutants, they were not quite a true common-origin team, since they did not choose to band together so much as they were *forced* to band together for their own well-being. Also, whereas other heroes met and decided by acclamation to remain partners, the X-Men were *recruited* in their teens by their group's organizer, the adult Professor Xavier. Being draftees from birth, so to speak, by dint of their peculiar powers, the X-Men could have evolved in to a super-hero version of the Armed Forces, but they didn't. Instead, whereas the Avengers, JLA, and Legion were clubs with members, and the FF and Inhumans were families, the X-Men were a school of students. As such, they remained aloof from the mainstream of Marvel super-herodom to a large extent, keeping their existence and headquarters a secret — which on the one hand allowed them private lives of sorts in their civilian roles such as the

FF could never enjoy, but on the other hand added fuel to the fire of mutant distrust among the general populace of Marvel-Earth.

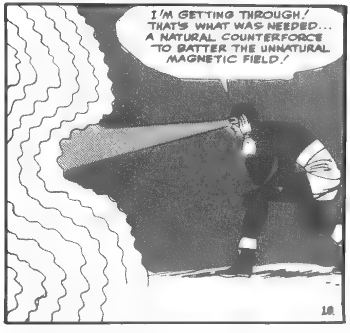
The origin of the X-Men was such a secret that even the readers had to wait years to learn it, as with the origins of the Justice Society and the Legion of Super-Heroes. Indeed, the full personal history of their founder, Professor X, is still being explored and amended, with many incidents as yet undocumented. Charles Xavier styles himself as "perhaps the first...mutant" resulting from his parents' exposure to radiation after the discovery of the atomic bond in 1945. Actually, since his father, Brian Xavier, died at Alamagordo when Charles was in late childhood, the radiation-exposure must have come in a far earlier stage of the elder Xavier's researches. Charles Xavier's coming-of-age was to be marked with tragedy, despite the fact that his super-normal mental powers, the least of which was telepathy, allowed him to excel at both physical and scholastic endeavors throughout his teens, with the only price paid for such successes being the early loss of his hair as a side-effect of his condition. In college, he would lose his first love, Moira MacTaggert, to another man; as a soldier in Korea, he would witness the apparent demise of his step-brother, Cain Marko (only to later combat the transformed Marko, who had become the unstoppable Juggernaut); still later, roaming the world to "find himself" after these events, he would lose the use of his legs in a revolution against the space-born villain Lucifer. After a period in which he retired, hermit-like, to his mansion in New York's Westchester county, Xavier emerged, albeit secretly, to begin the organization of his training academy for those like himself. *He* had to cope with the gift and the curse of unwanted extra powers alone; he resolved that — if he could help it — those mutants who came after him would have a guide and teacher in the man who came to be known as Professor X.

COME IN, MY CHILD! I AM PROFESSOR XAVIER! I AM GLAD YOU RECEIVED MY MESSAGE!
IT ALL SEEMED SO STRANGE, PROFESSOR, AND SO... MYSTERIOUS! I WAS TO TELL NO ONE BUT MY PARENTS THAT I'M COMING HERE... AND YOU DIDN'T DESCRIBE THE COURSE OF STUDY!
WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL IS THIS, SIR? I HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW!
I THINK YOU ALREADY SUSPECT, MISS GREY! YOU SEE, I CAN READ YOUR THOUGHTS QUITE CLEARLY... AND I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR UNUSUAL "TALENT"!
YOU, MISS GREY, LIKE THE OTHER FOUR STUDENTS AT THIS MOST EXCLUSIVE SCHOOL, ARE A MUTANT! YOU POSSESS AN EXTRA POWER.. ONE WHICH ORDINARY HUMANS DO NOT! THAT IS WHY I CALL MY STUDENTS... X-MEN, FOR EX-TRA POWER!
AND HERE THEY ARE NOW! ALLOW ME TO PRESENT THEM TO YOU! FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WE HAVE HANK McCOY, KNOWN TO US AS THE BEAST! BOBBY DRAKE, NICKNAMED ICEMAN! SLIM SUMMERS, OUR HUMAN CYCLOPS! AND WARREN WORTHINGTON THE THIRD, WHO IS CALLED THE ANGEL!
WELCOME TO THE X-MEN, MISS GREY!
BOYS, THIS IS MISS JEAN GREY! SHE WILL BE KNOWN AS MARVEL GIRL!

The Professor's aims were not wholly altruistic, however. While his "School for Gifted Youngsters," as the X-Men's base was called, would exist to help young mutants cope with the problems of being different (and was ever reader identification so easy to come by as in the exploits of a whole school devoted to kids who were born different from their peers?), equal attention would be given to their training in the use of their powers as a combative force. For one thing, the Professor knew that, had his stepbrother survived, the Juggernaut would one day walk the Earth, and it would be Xavier's responsibility to halt him. And more immediately important, while Xavier was organizing mutant youths to do good, his opposite number — known only as Magneto — was recruiting his self-styled "Brotherhood of Evil Mutants."

Thus, the original X-Men emerged as a team in their first issue having just acquired their fifth, and — for the time being — final fighting member. Although it was not until a series of back-up strips featured in issues 38-57 (inclusive) that the individual tales of their joining the group would be told, the band in that opening adventure included: Cyclops, a tall, quiet, brooding youth whose eyes emitted a shattering scarlet force beam; Iceman, youngest of the group, who resembled a quick-frozen version of the FF's Human Torch; the Angel, with the power of winged flight and an oversized ego; the Beast, whose acrobatic skill and manual and pedal dexterity (due to his oversized hands and feet) made him seem as much ape as man; and Marvel Girl, whose telekinetic abilities did not manifest themselves in an odd outward appearance as did the others' powers, and who would have melted into the background if not for her status as the sole distaff member. (That meant that in the early issues, she had to fight off the advances of all the other members. As ostracized "freaks," it is perhaps understandable that the male mutants would view the appearance of a *girl* mutant as manna from heaven, but when even Professor X began to think gently longing thought balloons about Jean Grey, things were clearly getting out of hand. Fortunately for the young telepathic's nervous constitution, the rivalry quickly narrowed down to Angel and Cyclops, while Marvel Girl herself made obvious her unspoken preference for the latter hero.)

Unlike the FF, who appeared full-blown in their familiar personae, it took the X-Men a few issues to settle down into their respective niches. The team originally had no leader, other than the Professor monitoring their battles from afar telepathically, although it seemed obvious an action commander '(or deputy leader, as Xavier termed it) would have to be chosen. For this honor, not all members were potential candidates: Iceman was too young and frivolous-minded, and Marvel Girl was too inexperienced, being the newest member (besides, who in 1963 ever heard of a *girl* leading a super-team? Right, Imra?). Although later flashback stories would take his eventual status for granted, no one was more surprised than Scott Summers when he was appointed to the post, since, as he pointed out, "...the Beast is a better scholar, while Angel is more aggressive." "But you...possess the rare quality of leader-



ship," intoned the Prof. "My decision stands!"

While it could easily be argued that Bobby and Jean took their cues from Johnny and Sue of the FF, as the group's resident "kid" member and "girl" member respectively, the early X-Men borrowed at least as much from the Simon and

Kirby "kid gang" groups of the 1940s as from the premier Marvel foursome. Comics history will doubtless view the original X-Men as one in a recurrent string of Jack Kirby archetypes. As Kirby introduced god-like heroes, monstrous heroes, common-origin teams, and kid-gang groups in the 1940s, and again in the Marvel Age with Thor, Hulk, the FF, and the X-Men (a "kid gang" grown slightly older and gifted with super-powers, but still with an adult mentor, just as the Newsboy Legion had the Guardian and the Boy Commandos had Rip Carter), so would he do so again in the 1970s at DC with the New Gods, the Demon, and the Forever People. As with all such "gangs," and all teams which owe a debt to Doc Savage's Amazing Five, the X-Men would have one extremely strong and/or argumentative member with a colorful speech pattern, and one who spoke as if he had swallowed a thesaurus. For the FF, the Thing was clearly the literary descendant of Scrapper, Brooklyn, and Monk Mayfair, while Reed Richards learned his vocabulary from the aptly-named Big-Words and Johnny Littlejohn. In the X-Men, it seemed obvious that the Beast would be the wise-guy and the Angel, born to wealth and good looks, would be the walking dictionary — and so it was for an issue or two. Then, as the characters established themselves, all charges of FF imitation were laid to rest as Hank (Beast) McCoy proved to be the team's repository of tongue-tangling *bon mots* (not to mention student of foreign languages), while Angel, if not the wiseacre that the Thing or Hawkeye would become, was the "flaw in the ointment" (as the aforementioned Ben Grimm would phrase it) with his inflated opinion of himself and the morale problems caused by his pursuit of Marvel Girl. Fandom took the big-footed, big-worded Beast to its collective heart, and Warren (Angel) Worthington III's hat size continued to expand as the letters columns declared him to be the most popular member of the group. (Why everyone liked Angel so much was always a mystery to your humble author, since the ability to fly, with or without wings, was never much cause for loud huzzahs among Super-heroes, every other one of whom could take to the air on a whim. At least Hawkman, also a winged champion, had his neat collection of ancient weapons to fall back on as a gimmick.)

II. ORGANIZATION

To return to the original X-Men, their position as Marvel's *secret* super-team, as opposed to the extremely public and even government-affiliated FF and Avengers, led, we have seen, to some distinct developments in terms of their organization.

Professor X had originally allied himself with the FBI in his initial search for would-be students, but the arrangement was clearly one of data-exchange only, as long as the Professor had an active hand in leading his little troupe. Only when Xavier appeared to have died (a rumor greatly exaggerated) at one point did the bureau attempt to intervene in an authoritative manner in X-Men business Given the outcome of their interference (they split the group up into units of one or two operatives scattered across the country for a time) and the fact that their "advice" was summarily ignored by the young mutants once it became obvious that the X—Men operated better on their own, it is easy to see why Hoover and Co. and their successors were not a large part of the strip thereafter, except for the occasional veiled hint when Professor X needed a favor from a friend in a high place. As far as the non-super-powered man in the street was concerned, then, the X-Men were as much unrecognized miscreants and outright outlaws as the Magneto-led mutants they opposed.

The X-Men have changed *vis-a-vis* their fellow heroes and supporting characters, not to mention John Q. Public, over the years. In the beginning, no one knew that Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters was really the X-Men's mansion headquarters. In the years since, though, this deception has continued to fool only the average citizen. The Juggernaut attacked the team in their base in his first appearance; Magneto, from his exile vantage point

in space after his initial defeat (in 11), was able to uncover his foes' hiding-place and lie in wait for them therein (17); the robotic Sentinels, with the ability to detect mutants at a distance, have had little trouble uncovering the X-Men in most of their battles. As to the other super-heroes, the Prof. apparently took Reed Richards into his confidence after a few meetings between the two, as nowadays the FF's Baxter Building sports a training facility for the members designed by Xavier, while Mr. Fantastic supplies the X-Men with uniforms composed of unstable molecules which adapt to the wearers' individual powers. As of the early 1970s, the Avengers have likewise been privy to the mutant team's secrets, after Professor X called on the assemblers for aid against an attack by Magneto and led them straight to the nicknamed X-Mansion (*AVENGERS 110*). Even the Defenders must have an inkling of the connection between Xavier and X-Men after their alliance with the Prof against Magneto and a new band of followers (DEFENDERS 15-16).

Speaking of the team's training facilities which the FF now emulates, the official designation for the X-Men's deadly gymnasium is "The Danger Room." Therein lie the computer-controlled menaces of seemingly unending variety, created by the good professor to test his students' mettles and abilities to use their powers both in tandem and separately. Even the Avengers have a version of the Danger Room in their mansion, though whether Xavier contributed to its design is unclear. More likely, Tony (Iron Man) Stark added the facility after his glimpse of X-Men training technique when he first met the Angel (*TALES OF SUSPENSE 49*).

While the X-Men may long have had the best training equipment of any Marvel super-team, their aura of secrecy has led to some necessary deficiencies in other areas. One of these is transportation. Although today's team possesses specialized aircraft in a league with the Avengers' quinjets (and rather inexplicably, too), though not the diversity of vehicles used by the FF, the original X-Men were often hard-pressed to get to the scene of their latest battle. Their only regular aircraft was a mere helicopter, and for ground transport —then and now — they use the Professor's Rolls-Royce Limousine — a luxurious means of sallying forth to combat, to be sure, but hardly properly inconspicuous for a team of undercover heroes. At one point in their careers, with Professor X kidnapped and the X-Copter wrecked beyond repair (a frequent fate of super-hero vehicles), it took the X-Men several issues to raise tourist-class air fare to the headquarters of their current antagonists, the evil mutant organization known only as Factor Three.

Another disadvantage of not being a publicly-recognized super-team is that the X-Men can hardly throw a press conference, as the Avengers often have, to advise the *hoi polloi* of changes in their line-up or official costumes. When, in the early issues, Marvel Girl would change her face mask as often as did the Wasp, or later,when all the members' uniforms would be constantly remodified to include less yellow and more blue (to say nothing of red belts), the group was still more or less recognizable as the X-Men of old. But when they first appeared in public in all-new regalia (in 40), so unfamiliar did they appear that they weren't clearly identified as *bona fide* good guys. As a point of interest, the new costumes introduced at that time were as follows: Cyclops' was predominantly blue and much the same as his current outfit, except for his visor, which was changed for the only time in *GIANT-SIZE X-MEN 1*. Angel's garb featured yellow as its main color (one reader opined that it made him look like a Swiss Mountaineer) and began his fashion of baring his blond locks *a la* Captain Marvel, Goliath II, Nomad, *et al*; Warren has since gone through more costume changes than anyone this side of the Wasp, and now wears an attractive streamlined uniform which is a combination of the designs and color schemes of several previous ones, and is mainly red and white (he was, it should be noted, the only X-Man to have worn an individualized costume as a solo super-hero before joining the team, when he appeared briefly as the Avenging Angel). The Beast donned a red and blue version of his original X-threads, which he wore until his transformation into a furry, not-quite human version of the same character (AMAZING ADVENTURES 11), at which point he needed only about as much costume as the Thing. Iceman had changed what little costume he possessed a bit over his career, but, like the Torch, it is hard to discern exactly what he is wearing when he uses his powers (as Iceman, he resembles an anthropomorphic ice cube); his later Champions outfit provided him with the first actual uniform beyond shorts, boots, and a belt. Marvel Girl's changeover was the largest departure from the original X-Men costumes of the first issue — perhaps understandably so, since she was the designer (with some help from Professor X, methinks) of the various uniforms and no doubt took the opportunity to stop looking so much like one of the boys. Her skin-tight leotard was dumped in favor of a green mini-skirted dress with yellow accoutrements. It was nothing too scandalous next to some of the super-heroine costumes that have been created since (to say nothing of some of the ensembles the new Jean Grey herself has worn since as Phoenix, Dark Phoenix and the Black Queen in more recent X-adventures), but it was nevertheless a daring costume for 1968, featuring as it did both a daring V-neck and bare legs at the same time (remember this was 13 years ago!).

Regarding changes in their roster, the X-Men have had fewer (during their initial run) than any group this side of the Fantastic Four, although today they constitute one of the more populous super-teams, counting all past and present members. The first addition to the ranks beyond the charter members of issue 1 came when the Mimic, a former foe with the power to adopt the abilities of others and the only-ever non-mutant X-Man, became the group's temporary deputy leader. Later, as mentioned above, the Professor appeared to have perished, and the team carried on for a time without him. During that period, two new mutants allied themselves to the regulars: Lorna Dane, now called Polaris; and Alex Summers, Scott's younger brother, a.k.a. Havok. The Professor "returned from the dead," as it were in issue 65, and then there were eight — just in time for the team's comic to be cancelled with 66.

X-MEN has been described, in George Olshevsky's Mar-

vel indexes and elsewhere, as the "bad boy" of the early Marvel line. After an opening string of eleven fantastic issues by originators Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the book passed into the artistic hands of the late Werner Roth, working initially under Kirby panel breakdowns (after a single issue by Alex Toth, also over Kirby layouts), and under the scripting direction of then-neophyte Roy Thomas (with 20). Many interesting and even innovative stories resulted, but the X-Men were never to be the super-stars that the FF and the Avengers (no matter who was on the team at any given moment) were, given this particular creative staff. After Thomas' departure, confusion reigned as Gary Friedrich and Arnold Drake (ironically, the co-creator of the X-lookalike Doom Patrol), singly and together, attempted to keep things going for the mutant heroes. Roth was assigned to the *"Origins of the X-Men"* back-up strip, and Don Heck took over the book's main feature. A few issues drawn in a pinch by S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Jim Steranko broke the mold, followed by the first published work of Barry (CONAN) Windsor-Smith, produced under truly awful working conditions and looking it (as Smith himself admits). Sales were still passable, but comparatively low for a Marvel Super-hero comic of that period, and, with Thomas and Roth's original departure, the X-Men's adventures seemed to be viewed as a training ground for new (or new-to-Marvel) craftsmen perfecting their art before being shifted over to another, more prestigious series. Stan Lee was quoted as saying that he and Jack Kirby would never go back to *THE X-MEN*, and that the series "would have to make it on its own." Under recognizable Marvel regulars, such as Don Heck, or Roth, sales were steady but never outstanding, but, with issue 56, newcomer (to Marvel) Neal Adams joined a returning Roy Thomas to "revitalize" the title. Although Adams' work was excellent by any standards, and Thomas contributed some inventive plotting and dramatic dialogue, the sharp deviation from the series' established look and feel alienated many of the old-time readers, apparently without attracting a replacement audience quickly enough. Adams' work was dynamic and powerful, but was totally lacking in the warmth and charm that had been Roth's strength (another similarity — both *X-MEN* and *DOOM PATROL* were produced by craftsmen who had long associations with the romance comics genre, Werner Roth and Bruno Permiani), and the transition was extremely jarring. With X-MEN's last shot at becoming a super-star attraction apparently a failure, Marvel cancelled the title, feeling that the creators involved could better devote their energies to other projects.

As always at Marvel, though, while a comic may die, the characters go on forever. The X-Men went undercover for a time, while their title was revived only as a reprint book. They resurfaced in *AMAZING ADVENTURES* to give a send-off to their first graduating member, the Beast, who was awarded his own short-lived strip. Following his change in appearance and loss of his solo vehicle, Hank McCoy joined the Avengers, where he has until recently remained, and thus his services were lost to his former mutant team-mates except in cases of dire emergency. The remaining X-Men (sans Havok and Polaris, who took a sabbatical to complete thier academic graduate work, and incidentally starred in an Archie Goodwin HULK story) turned up in mufti to help Spider-Man battle Morbius in an early *MARVEL TEAM-UP*, and Xavier helped Reed Richards and Tony Stark in an attempt to cure the Hulk.

The X-Men were still around, but they were losing members hand-over-fist. The Sentinels returned, and couldn't even find their old foes, and so contented themselves with fighting the Avengers instead. (At that time, the Avengers counted two mutants — Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch — as members.) Magneto returned and defeated the entire team, plus a handful of Avengers, with his new powers of mental domination. Rallying from that escapade, the X-Men discovered Angel among the missing, and instigated a search. Not only didn't they find him, but they discovered that Beast, Havok, and Polaris had also vanished—and while they were investigating further, Iceman disappeared as well. The remaining trio of Professor Xavier, Cyclops, and Marvel Girl (the latter two back in their original costumes for some unstated reason) cameoed in yet another *HULK* tale before joining forces with Captain America and the Falcon in their title to battle the group called the Secret Empire and rescue their captive fellows. The X-Men were back at full fighting strength — minus the Beast — when suddenly...

In 1975, over five years since the all-but loss of their own title, the X-Men were being revived...and yet again, they weren't being revived. As per Marvel's original plan at the time, new double-sized comics were being created for several super-team concepts, among them the Invaders, Champions, Inhumans, Guardians of the Galaxy, and...a new team of X-Men. As it turned out, the "Giant-Size" idea was overthrown,and only two issues of *GIANT-SIZE X-MEN* appeared, the second being a reprint. And in the first, the original X-Men were defeated and captured, and Cyclops and the Professor were forced to recruit a new team (of diverse international origins) to bail them out. Thus, three supporting players from earlier tales (Sunfire from *X-MEN 64*, Banshee from *X-MEN 28*, etc., and Wolverine from *HULK 181*) joined forces with four new characters from the minds of Len Wein and Dave Cockrum (Storm, Colossus, Night crawler, and Thunderbird), and the New X-Men were born.

The X-Men are dead; Long live the X-Men!

THE STRANGEST SUPER-HEROES OF ALL!

1 SEPT. IND.

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

the X-MEN

FIRST ISSUE!

IN THE SENSATIONAL FANTASTIC FOUR STYLE!

X-MEN

THE CHRIS CLAREMONT REVOLUTION

It goes without saying that the cottage industry consisting of the various related X-Men inspired titles is the most popular in comic books today. The single individual most responsible for the success and quality of these books is Chris Claremont. His tight pacing, careful plotting and interesting character development has caught the imagination and affection of a whole generation of comic book readers. In this interview we will explore the development of Claremont the writer and, hopefully, in the process, illuminate something of Claremont the man.

INTERVIEW

Vintage Claremont—at left, Starlord with John Byrne, at right, Red Sonja/Spider-Man from Marvel Team-Up.

CF: The best place to start is at the beginning, I guess I'll start by asking when you first became interested in reading fiction.

Claremont: When I first began to read. When I was a child...Kipling, various British authors. A.J. Ranson, Dickens when I was older.

CF: At what age did you start reading Kipling?

Claremont: My father used to read it to me when I was a baby, and I started reading it myself when I was, I don't know maybe five, six.

CF: Which stories?

Claremont: Top of Boots Hill, things like that.

CF: Did you read his ballads or just his stories?

Claremont: No, my father has a complete collection, and I went through the whole thing as a kid, more than once Mills, Carol, things like that.

CF: This is before you started reading comics I would imagine.

Claremont: I didn't start reading comics until I was a teenager.

CF: Do you think starting with this type of reading matter affects the way you approach writing a story today?

Claremont: I would assume it has to. A writer is a sum total of all the influences that affect his or her life. The experiences in one's life, the material one reads, all goes into the mix, it's reflected in the work itself.

CF: Do you occasionally write something and then realize it's almost a specific repostulation of an earlier work?

Claremont: Of mine or someone else's?

CF: Of something you've read at an early age.

Claremont: You mean, have I plagerized?

XD: I don't mean specifically scene for scenes. I mean in terms of general concept or type of action.

Claremont: I would like to think not. I would like the material I do to be my own. If there are influences, those are generally for other people to find. It's possible, I just haven't looked. It would require an in-depth examination of what I've done, and what I'm doing, which I simply don't have time to do. I'm too busy creating work to stop and analyze it, to look at it objectively.

CF: When you entered school did you find that you were introduced to material there that encouraged or discouraged your reading?

Claremont: Generally, I read about two or three years ahead of my class, which generally created more problems than it was worth. The idea of being a round peg in a square hole so to speak. You are expected to follow a certain curriculum and no one is especially pleased to find that

you are many months or years ahead of them. Especially since that results in you being somewhat uninterested in the class at hand. If you've already read the material — if the material is old hat — then it tends to lead to boredom. Boredom tends to be frowned upon by teachers.

CF: Do you think that type of pressure caused you to internalize and become a writer?

Claremont: No.

CF: That type of alienation seems to be common to artists and writers and creative people.

Claremont: It may be. Again that's an element of intro-or extro-spection that I really haven't indulged in. I'm not really at this stage interested in why I am. I accept that I am and try to deal with that as best that I can.

CF: What led you to read comics?

Claremont: As a child, through my relatives in England I received a subscription to a tabloid comic called **Eagle**, which at that time was probably the finest collection of graphic art available in Europe on a regular basis. The kind of place where you could regularly see Frank Hampton or Frank Bellamy doing all kinds of fantastic work. The magazine had one photogravure color plate every week. So you had the front and back pages and the center spread in full color. The color—we can't even begin to approach today. It was phenomenal. It was...when it was good, it was superb! It was about 1960-1963 and of course, a kid needs something to do while loafing around the barbershop waiting for his turn. They invariably had among the magazines scores of comic books. So I would sit around and read them.

CF: Which American comics did you begin reading first?

Claremont: Oh, god only knows. All manner of crazy books. The barbershop...the barber wasn't very particular what he had, he just dumped a stack on the table.

CF: Any one make a particular impression?

Claremont: Not really.

CF: Did you find any particular writer of particular interest?

Claremont: No. Not in comics.

CF: You also probably read science fiction?

Claremont: In those days.

CF: What authors drew your attention?

Claremont: Heinlein, Norton, Arthur Clarke, John Brunner, Tony Boucher, and that was basically where everything started.

CF: Did any particular story have an impact, a lasting impact on the way...

Claremont: In terms I suppose of stories fondly remembered. **Have Spacesuit Will Travel, Citizen Of The Galaxy, The Witch World** series, **The Fall of Moondust, The Fall of Night, Child of Zen.** Brunner's work Zanzibar...well Zanzibar and **Jagged Orbit** are later. I'd have to go back and check my bookcase. And Burroughts of course.

CF: I noticed that in Kipling and Heinlein and Norton and a number of others, which were apparently early influences, they always have a very strong, heroic protagonist and in a lot of the stories you've written, you've utilized a lot of the same character type.

Claremont: In a sense that they are reflections of the same basic pattern. I mean, what Heinlein was doing and Andre Norton, were writing heroic fiction...Strong dynamic types, male/female, positive/negative. That's what a comic book basically is. The idea is to create strong, definitive, fundamental images: good, bad, whatever.

RED SONJA
SHE-DEVIL OF THE HYRKANIAN STEPPES!!
HEY! WHAT DO YOU DO UNNNGNH!
YOU MAY HAVE ME, MONSTER, BUT YOU'LL NOT KEEP ME WITHOUT A FIGHT!

HEAR ME, I PRAY!!!!
YOU'RE NOT KILLING ANYONE, CREEP!
HA HA HA HA HA
I'VE HEARD ABOUT YOU, SCAVENGER. YOU'VE KILLED LITTLE GIRLS BEFORE, HAVEN'T YOU?!?
HAVEN'T YOU??
HA HA

CF: In your work though, the idea of heroism and loyalty seem to be present where a number of comic book writers seem to denigrate those qualities.

Claremont: Well, they're them, and I'm me.

CF: I noticed that these authors you mentioned, particularly say Heinlein or Kipling tend to elevate those qualities...That's why I was asking before if the pattern of what you read has an effect on the way you do material.

Claremont: That is why I said that that is more easily judged from the outside. When one is actually in the process of creating work, it's impossible to step back and say, well, are my influences coming from this and this. If I went away for a year, didn't look at anything I wrote and then came back...but then I would not be doing it. To me, doing it is of primary importance. I'm not, at this stage, that interested in analyzing it.

CF: What made you decide to write comic books as opposed to novels or short stories or television or anything else?

Claremont: Luck more than anything else. I never intended to be a professional writer full time in the first place. My initial ambition...my major in college was international relations. My ambition was to become a diplomatist to go to the State Department...play with reality. From there I went into acting. I figured that's what I would spend the rest of my life doing with a little writing on the side. What happened was that after I moved to New York, writing began paying more money and more often and Marvel began buying my stuff more often then anyone else. One thing led to another. I discovered I had a knack for it.

CF: When you were in college did you develop a particular world view?

Claremont: No, more of an ability to analyze existing trends, existing patterns, to look at it and see what's happening, try to anticipate.

CF: Did you actually begin to work in the area of political science?

Claremont: You mean in terms of getting jobs?

CF: Yes.

Claremont: No.

CF: Did you do any volunteer work of that type?

Claremont: Only in the Mobe.

CF: Your first professional work then would have been as an actor?

Claremont: Yes.

CF: What was that?

Claremont: Off off-Broadway, New York and regional theatre.

CF: Any particular roles?

Claremont: Not really. It was mostly experimental productions, things that lasted six weeks and then disappeared into the ether. Some walk on work on Edge of Night.

CF: I find it interesting that the authors you're interested in, Heinlein and Kipling, would seem to give you a different influence than the Mobilization Committee would.

Claremont: No, its...at the time it seemed the right thing to do. The war. As far back as high school I couldn't see any justification or logic for it. As a matter of fact, my senior year thesis was based on...well my contention was

THE APACHE WERE MEANT TO BE HUNTERS, WARRIORS-- NOT BAD-ASSED EXPERTS IN DRUMS.
THEY WERE MEANT TO RUN ACROSS THRU THE GRASS PLAINS GRASSES, THE WIND BLOWING WILDLY THRU THEIR HAIR.
ONCE UPON A TIME, THESE PLAINS COULD STAND BEFORE THE APACHE
THE BISON THAT COVERED THESE PLAINS FELL LIKE MAN BEFORE APACHE SKILL, APACHE ENERGY!--
--BUT, NEVER DID ANY BISON FALL LIKE-- THIS!
THERE, NOTICED ONE--DO YOU SEE?
THERE IS STILL A MAN AMONG THE APACHE!
BOOM!

that there was no rational justification for the United States presence in Vietnam. My teacher and I got into a delicious argument over it.

CF: Were you opposed to the war in the sense of the United States' presence or were you opposed to war in the sense of war itself?

Claremont: At the time, in a purely clinical appraisal of the situation, it was to my admittedly arrogant eighteen-year-old mind, the wrong war at the wrong place, the wrong time with the wrong people, to paraphrase someone out of the Korean war. The war to my mind couldn't be justified in political or military terms. There was no way that I could see to win, short of expunging the population of North Vietnam, and if the United States wasn't prepared to do that then there was really no point to it. It seemed obvious that South Vietnam...the government was not capable of supporting it's own existance.

CF: So it was the particular war itself, as opposed to war in general...

Claremont: Of course. I mean therein lies the crux of a diplomatists conflicts, the acceptance that war is a necessary resort of national policy. And yet the cost of war in temporal and spiritual terms is almost too terrible to contemplate.

CF: Although at times it is necessary.

Claremont: Necessary to who?

CF: Necessary to survival.

Claremont: The point was, in context, was that war necessary to the survival of the United States? Was the havok we helped wreak in Southeast Asia necessary or even justifiable? Had we left well enough along in 1956, 1948 or even better 1945, when there was a very real opportunity Ho could have been brought into the Western sphere of influence had the United States helped him against the French instead of helping the French against him. Who knows what the history of the region might have been other than that tens of thousands--hundred of thousands —of innocent lives might have been spared. And the potential ruination of the American economy might have been avoided. Again, hindsight is the perfect way to look at a situation. At the time...I, myself, couldn't find an argument to sustain it..

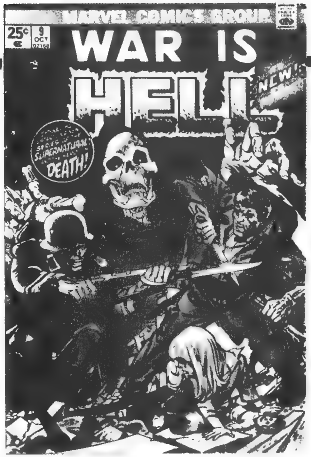
CF: There seems to be a basic immorality in entering a war and bringing troops into a war and refusing to make a decision either not to stay or to stay and commit oneself to winning.

Claremont: Define winning.

CF: Well, achieving the stated objectives of a conflict.

Claremont: There was no consistent stated set of objectives relating to that war. The objectives changed every year, with every administration. No one knew precisely what we wanted or how we wanted to achieve it. Was this essentially a Vietnamese civil war; was it an invasion North Vietnam to South Vietnam; was this a situation where an influx of foreign troops [i.e. American] could make the difference, or was it something that should basically be left to be settled between the indigenous population?

CF: I think that unless you have preexisting clear objectives before committing force, you should not commit force.



Claremont: Right. But at the time...it's easy to say at this end. Looking back....

CF: Well, truthfully, that's always been my opinion. The most immoral thing to me of the Vietnam war was not that we were there, but that we were there with no objectives and if we did have objectives, they were not objectives that we were prepared to commit to winning. And that means that you're just throwing lives away year after year after year.

We seem to have gotten a bit sidetracked there. I think it's important how reality is viewed and how it affects fictional reality. After working in acting you began, as you say, to work for Marvel on a freelance basis?

Claremont: I went to work at Marvel as an assistant editor in the Spring of 1974.

CF: Weren't you first there in '69 though?

Claremont: As a gopher. For two months.

CF: I see, then you went back there in '74?

Claremont: I was freelancing for them for a couple of years. In addition to acting.

CF: What was your first published writing?

Claremont: My first professional sale was a novelette to the **Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.** The sale was made in 1972, the story was published about eight months later.

CF: What was that about?

Claremont: Science fiction about a certain brand of telepaths in the near future. They had been dragooned into serving mankind, whether they wanted to or not.

CF: I see, and your first comic book sale?

Claremont: Technically, I suppose it would be some Sgt. Fury filler pages back in 1969. But the first story with my byline on it is a Hulk that I sold in 72—a flop—that eventually became a story that Archie Goodwin scripted...I forget the number, 148 or something.

CF: And your first regular series?

Claremont: First series was **Giant Size Dracula**, that was 1974. And then **War is Hell**, I guess.

CF: Again you were working with the concept of military conflict.

Claremont: Well, war books were back in then I suppose. The idea was dropped into my lap. I was told to make something of it.

CF: It was more the anti-war books that were in wasn't it?

Claremont: All depends on your point of view. Again the pro-, anti-...The decision I made in doing **War is Hell** was not to do a book that was ostensibly a message one way or the other, pro or anti, but just vignettes of the war. Vignettes of World War II and let the story speak for itself.

CF: But don't you control the view of war based on what slices of conflict you present?

Claremont: To the extent that an editor controls what a given scene looks like in a movie.

CF: By what you select and what you leave out?

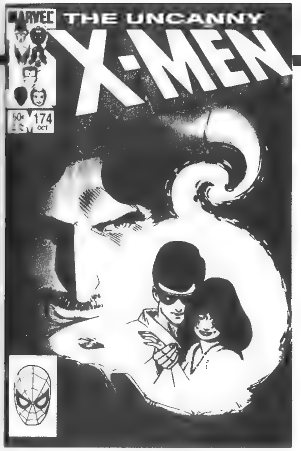
Claremont: The trick, the necessity of something like that, is to find a true moment, a reality that transcends the question of pro or anti. You identify with the character, with the moment. You learn hopefully, something about yourself coming away from the story. You come out of it a little different than the way you went in. As do the characters, and one person could read the story and think to himself, "Well, this character was very heroic, very courageous, very noble, he did a good thing." Another might say "Yes, he did all these things, but no matter what happened, it was still a dirty disgusting business." The attempt was to go beyond the casual facile kind of traditional approach. Unfortunately given the parameters of the series there was a tonal cynicism...despair. When your hero is a ghost, it does kind of create problems.

CF: I think that the market Marvel was targetting it at, and the time period Marvel was publishing the book, they were trying to create a feeling of despair about warfare.

Claremont: It's easily done.

CF: Do you think that the stark violence and the intensity of combat tend to make quicker characterization and revelation of a person? Or of a character?

Claremont: It is impossible to say because there is no...the conflict and action in a superhero story is just as intense, if its handled properly. The focus is just as tight. The necessity for exposition of character and the ex-



ploration or character in the shortest possible time as extreme.

CF: Isn't there something, perhaps because of the familiarity and the preponderance of the superhero story, that it's almost a more sanitized violence than the type of warfare you were portraying in the **War is Hell**?

Claremont: The...it can be. It depends on the writer, it depends on the moment. The critical element in the portrayal of violence is not the actual, I think the physical part, but the emotional. How does the character—how does he or she feel about what they have done or has been done to them. How do you cope with the moral and emotional toll it takes. To me that is the important question, not how badly one can be beaten up. The violence, to me what...what Wolverine endures in his mini-series to achieve his goal is no more grim or graphic than what Sgt. Rock endures every month. The important thing, to me, is that Kanigher with Rock and I with Wolverine are trying to portray the emotion. The pain behind the violence, or beyond the violence. The cost.

CF: Isn't there also an aspect of people not in control of what's happening to them?

Claremont: No one—I mean no character—in a comic book or any fictional work is in control of what is happening to them, the writer is in control.

CF: Yes, but depending on the situation, they have a certain amount, or seeming amount of control of what they encounter or where they are.

Claremont: The characters in **Barefoot Gen**, when the bomb drops, are no more in control of their lives than the characters in FF #49 and #50 when Galactus arrived in New York and prepared to destroy the world. If by extension you moved...you took the moment of **Barefoot Gen** and you moved it...instead of setting it in Hiroshima and instead moved it to the farthest northern reaches of Okaido, they wouldn't have known what happened, it would have been a null event, it would have been something that came over the radio. By the same token, if you took a character from New York and put him in Albany, he wouldn't have known what was happening.

CF: In most superhero books, though, don't the characters almost deliberately seem to enter the area of conflict or even look for the scene of potential conflict?

Claremont: No.

CF: But Wolverine flies to Japan...

Claremont: Yes, but the hero is always the respondant to events the hero never initiates. The hero responds to the antagonist. In Wolverine's situation, Shinga married Mariko to the man who became her husband. That was the initial act. That brought the response from Wolverine...flying out to Japan. Everything that happened...

CF: Nonetheless, he had the choice of flying or not flying to Japan. Or Spiderman goes swinging from rooftop to rooftop looking for...

Claremont: They all have the choice.

CF: But if you're looking at...Let's go back to a scene from **War is Hell**, very often these characters did not have the choice.

Claremont: The only character in the book that didn't have a choice was the ghost. Wolverine could no more not have gone to find out what happened to Mariko and stayed true to his character than a character in **War is Hell**, a fighter pilot, could have refused to fly out against the Luftwaffe. In that sense, every character in comics, every character in literature is caught up in events beyond his control or her control. The choice is inherent in the writer putting pencil to paper, pen to paper.

CF: In a lot of literature, say what Ayn Rand would call romantic literature, the basic theme is how the character takes control and molds his environment. Whereas it seems in most war stories, that doesn't take place.

Claremont: I can't speak for most war stories, I only did...

CF: Well, in your war story.

Claremont: No, that's not true. In each of those stories, well the four that I consider my own, well actually all of them, you have a set of characters who are caught up in a greater historical situation, trying to mold the events in their favor. To salvage their lives, to survive, to go from point A to point B, to arrive at a resolution. The only event that is beyond their control is that of history, that applies to anything. You know, the Ilyana and Storm mini-series is a mute point in that it has already happened, we know the outcome. Ilyana spent seven years...and came out of it changed. We knew that on the last page of **X-Men #160**. What the mini-series is about is how she arrived at that point, what stations on the cross, so to speak, did

SHE SOARS ALOFT LIKE AN EBON BIRD, LIGHTNING LANCING FROM HER FINGERTIPS, THE GLOW OF LIFE SHINING FULL UPON HER FACE...
SHE IS HAPPY HERE--ONLY TRULY HAPPY WHERE AMONG THE ELEMENTS--

she touch along the way? In a sense that whole series, the whole sequence of events, are out of her control

CF: In 1975 you were introduced to the book that probably made your reputation in the comic book industry.

Claremont: Iron Fist.

CF: Moving on to the X-Men, were you involved at all with the creation of that book or was that...?

Claremont: Only in a peripheral sense in that I was sitting in when Dave and Len were doing plotting sessions and I'd kibitz in a few elements. The most notable being how to get rid of Kraoa at the end. But aside from that, the creation of the characters was exclusively Len's and Dave's—Len Wein and Dave Cockrum.

CF: You began writing the book right at the beginning, the characters personalities hadn't formed yet. You began to direct the characters. How did you decide what direction you should take the characters, who was going to form what type of personality? How does that all come about?

Claremont: It was by no means the unilateral decision that you seem to be indicating it was. The book was as much Dave's as mine. More so perhaps, he created the characters. We had long discussions who they were, why they were, what they were, where we wanted them to go, where we thought they would go. And to a large extent the first three issues are pretty much shakedown. The first issue Dave and I felt we had a strong sense of what the book was all about was #98. In a sense we let it evolve by it self, we didn't give it a specific direction. We wanted to let it go for a while, see what turned out.

CF: The concept of the earlier **X-Men** had always been that these were a group of young teenagers in a school being trained to be superheroes. Yet in the second incarnation the heroes—the characters—appear to be older.

Claremont: As I understand it, Len Wein had felt that they should be younger teenagers. Scott would be the oldest, or Wolverine perhaps. Dave and I were both not comfortable with this concept. We began evolving it in a different direction. The idea that Wolverine is much older. Banshee was certainly the professor's contemporary, Storm...until I did the origin story, we weren't prepared to giver her an age, suffice...save that she was no where near a teenager. Even if she was no more than fifteen years old, in terms of emotional maturity she was as ancient as time. We found that regardless of how one considered the group in terms of age, in terms of experience with Wolverine and Banshee and to a certain extent Storm and Cyclops you had most of the group being experienced. Fairly well versed in their powers, knowing what to do, and it made the original concept of the school increasingly hard because a set of attitudes and parameters that would hold true for a set of kids in their middle teens would not apply to young adults. Partly because they were too old and partly because the kids themselves were starting to feel feisty, feel their own oats, rebellion, letting the budding rebellion—the natural rebellion of youth take over.

CF: In other words, the evolving of the characters took place before you decided on this break from the original format.

Claremont: No. As the characters involved the evolution away from...the original format evolves with them. We never decided the first day to scrap the original concept, its just that as time went on certain things—the natural progression and we just went with it.

CF: Why was it decided to drop Thunderbird?

Claremont: Basically it was...there are two ways to basically lock a reader into a series. One is to create a character that the reader identifies with, empathizes for, and then put the character through hell and the reader will go right along with him. The second is to do something for shock value right at the beginning. The feeling was that since at that time **X-Men** was a quarterly, there was not time to build up the momentum, issue to issue momentum that you would build on a regular monthly title. Each issue would have to be self contained exclusively. If you took ten issues, for example, to build reader involvement then we'd be three years down the line, so it was felt that they wanted to get everyone's attention right away and the way to do it, they decided was to kill Thunderbird. It was something that had never happened to the X-Men before.

CF: It was similar to what Stan Lee had done with Jr. Juniper earlier.

Claremont: Something like that.

CF: Why Thunderbird?

Claremont: Because at the time, he was basically redundant. At the time, his powers were basically Wolverine's powers. Len felt that Wolverine was a character with more potential.

CF: And the more antagonistic personality was...

Claremont: Everything that Thunderbird had, Wolverine had better and claws besides.

CF: How do you account for the success, the sudden success of the book, especially since the previous incarnations of the book had not been successful?

Claremont: The obvious answer is that the readers recognized the obvious quality of the writing and the art and the potential of the characters.

CF: Well, you've written other books, perhaps as well,

and they have never gained the sudden success that these characters have.

Claremont: I suppose you could say that groups are in and the X-Men happened to be the first of the groups. Every group book other than **Champions,** that has been introduced in the last eight years has been a success.

CF: But not the massive success. I mean the **Avengers** and the **Fantastic Four** haven't the success.

Claremont: The **Avengers** and the **Fantastic Four** have had a rough time the last few years, the multiple change-overs in art and creative teams.

CF: But the **X-Men** has had changeover in the art...

Claremont: Actually, there hasn't been that serious a change over. We have had basically five artists since the series began: Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, Dave Cockrum, Paul Smith and John Romita, Jr., with only a comparative handful of fill-in artists along the way. We've had the same writer for eight years. So you have a great sense of continuity that a great many titles at DC and Marvel don't have. Again, the Titans have proved to be a success, the Micronauts are still in there, the Omega Men is a success, Marvel is preparing a number of new group books.

CF: Why do team books seem to be so pervasive.

Claremont: Well, they're pervasive because they're successful.

CF: Ok. Why are they so successful?

Claremont: If I knew that, I'd be running the company.

CF: The next major change in the lineup of the team is when Banshee left the team. Why was that?

Claremont: Basically we had to make room for the Phoenix, and there was a limit to the amount of people you could put into the book.

CF: And still have characterization.

Claremont: Well, if you assume a rough yardstick of one page per character, to introduce them, and you have seven main characters, plus if you have a team of villains, that's one page each to introduce them, plus supporting characters, plus the plot. You use up the book real fast.

CF: One thing that the **X-Men** comic seems to be a ground-breaker in, even to a larger degree than the Stan Lee novels, is the use of soap opera techniques in adventure stories. Do you think that that's had an effect on the popularity of the stories?

Claremont: I assume it has, I don't know. Again if I did know, I'd do it far more successfully than I have.

CF: I don't know that that can be accomplished.

Claremont: Well, I'd try it on other titles.

CF: You mentioned Phoenix and that brings to mind Dark Phoenix and the whole conflict that arose in terms of story-telling. In reading the issues, I got the impression that there wasn't really a clear picture of how the Dark Phoenix story was going and how it would wind up.

Claremont: There was a very clear picture of where it was going and where it would end up, the picture just reversed at the last minute.

CF: So she was deliberately turned into a killer and then was going to continue to be part of the Marvel Universe?

Claremont: I had it all worked out, Jim unfortunately didn't agree with my rationale. More unfortunately at that point, the book was already in production.

CF: That's right, we had those pages of artwork. Why was it decided that Phoenix had to die and other characters who have killed in the Marvel Universe are not condemned to that fate?

Claremont: I don't know, that's more determined by Jim than myself since he was making the decision as Editor-In-Chief and it was done in his exercise of his editorial perogative. He'd be the one to give you that answer.

CF: Even Wolverine has been established as a killer, hasn't he?

Claremont: On occasion. Of necessity.

CF: And Shooter isn't insisting on the same.

Claremont: I haven't heard from him.

CF: I can see why. When we interviewed John Byrne recently, he mentioned that the Wolverine character was not considered to be a major character that was given a lot of attention until he became the artist on the series. Is that a character he worked with you particularly to develop?

Claremont: It was a character that John has a special fondness for, more so than Dave. By the same token, Dave had a fondness for Nightcrawler. Every artist and writer has their own particular favorite and in any series in any company there is a tendancy to play those favorites.

CF: A lot has been written in the press both favorable and unfavorable about the way you handle female characters in the comics you've written. One pattern which seems to be true in a number of them is that they wind up dead. Is there a particular reason?

Claremont: Bad luck I would think.

CF: They seem to develop a great deal of power and unlike Stan Lee's prerequisite in Spiderman that with power comes responsibility, they seem to wind up with a lack of control.

Claremont: Well, the only two characters that come to mind whose death I actually wrote were Phoenix and Satana. Satana's death was an editorial decision to make way for a new Satana that Jim and Mike Reischer were working on with Mike Vosburg. Unfortunately, she never saw print. So the actual demise proved pointless. Phoenix was an exercise in power, the use of power. In her case, it proved more than she could handle. Not to say that the same could hold true for Binary or Storm, or anyone else. The same as it wouldn't hold true for Cyclops or Professor X or whoever.

CF: Storm seems to be running into some very serious problems as well, though.

Claremont: The essence of melodrama is conflict. The essence of conflict is to screw your characters' lives up as enthusiastically as possible.

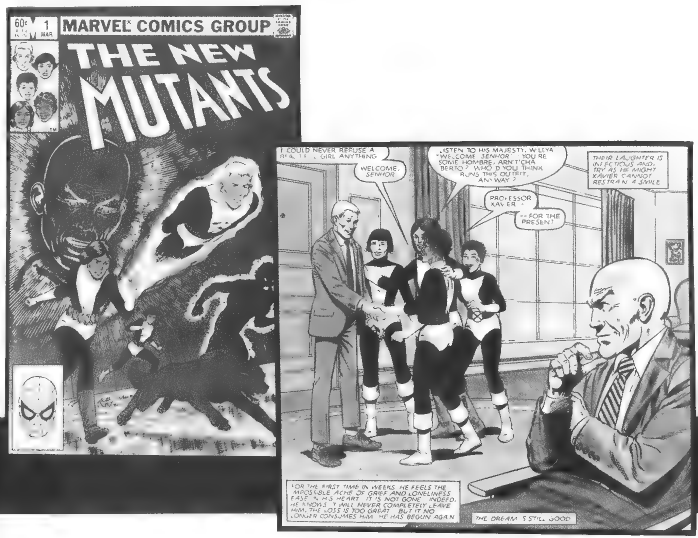
CF: In other words, the idea is to handicap the characters?

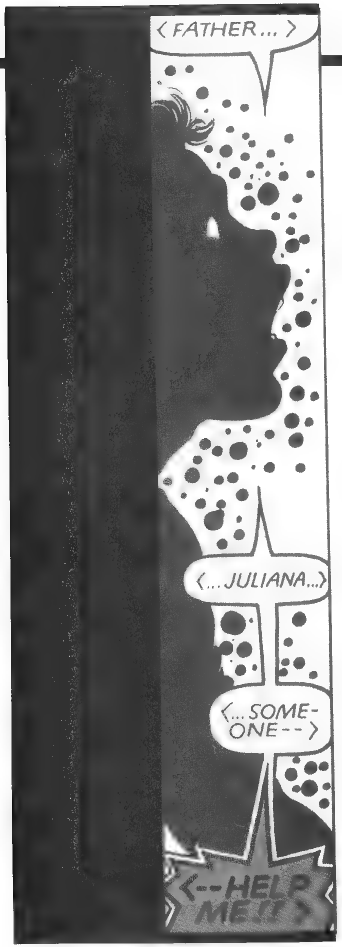
Claremont: No, the idea is to think of the worst possible situation you can think of to place a character in and then make it worse.

THE NEW MUTANTS

If the new X-Men were created to be an international team, the New Mutants followed this line even more closely to become a group with a truly cosmopolitan flavor. Created in 1982, the **New Mutants** can be seen as the turning point where Marvel consciously set out to create a very aggressively active mutant universe within the larger boundaries of the Marvel Universe.

Marvel Graphic Novel No. 4 introduces The New Mutants in a sequence reminescent of the section of **Giant Size X-Men** No. 1 wherein Prof. X finds the new X-Men one by one as their mutant abilities reveal them to a hostile human populace of their respective homelands.


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE NEW MUTANTS
I COULD NEVER REFUSE A REAL LIVE... GIRL ANYTHING
WELCOME SENHOR!
LISTEN TO HIS MAJESTY, M'LEVA. "ME... COME SENHOR." YOU'RE SOME HOMBRE, AIN'T CHA, BESSO? WHO D'YOU THINK FLING THIS OUTFIT AN' WAS?
PROFESSOR XAVIER -- FOR THE PRESENT
THEIR LAUGHTER IS INFECTIOUS AND I, TOO, AM THE MIGHTY XAVIER, CANNOT RESTRAIN A SMILE
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WEEKS, HE FEELS THE WHOLENESS, THE HEALTH OF HIS MIND AND BODY. EASE IN HIS HEART. IT'S NOT GOOD-BYE, HE KNOWS. I WILL NEVER COMPLETELY LEAVE HIM. THE "LOSE IS TOO GREAT... BUT IT NO LONGER CONSUMES HIM. HE HAS BEGUN AGAIN.
THE DREAM'S STILL GOOD



The origin story, "Renewal," opens in Scotland where Moira MacTaggert (a friend to the X-Men, as revealed in past adventures) encounters 14 year old Rahne Sinclair, who has just manifested her mutant shape-changing ability before the angry eyes of Reverend Craig and his followers. Moira orders them off her land and rescues Rahne, deciding on the spot that only one person can help her — Prof. X!

In Rio De Janiero, Roberto da Costa is in the midst of an important soccer match when his strange power manifests itself. As a result he is targeted for kidnapping.

Another mutant, age 16, is Sam Guthrie, a coal miner's son who reveals his bizarre power when he rescues his boss during a deadly cave-in. Prof. X doesn't learn of this incident but instead young Sam is recruited, through deception, into The Hellfire Club.

In the Medicine Bow Mountains near Sudance, Colorado, the young Indian maiden, Danielle Moonstar, has also begun manifesting mutant powers, although hers are far more arcane and magical in nature. Her grandfather, Black Eagle, reveals that he has contacted an old friend, Charles Xavier, to help her best use her newly formed powers. These powers forsee her grandfather's death — an event brought about by a renegade member of The Hellfire Club bent on taking over the organization.

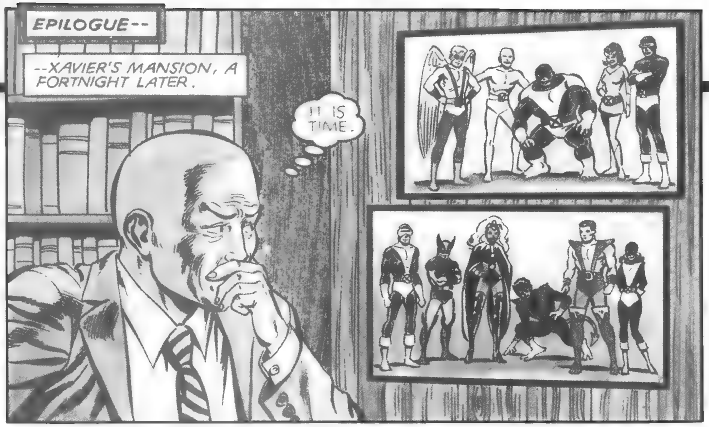
At Prof. Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, Moira MacTaggert is there with Rahne and Prof. X is testing a young Vietnamese girl, Xi'an Coy Mahn. Her code name is Karma. She can possess a person's mind.

Along with his new pupils, Prof. X travels to Colorado in response to Black Eagle's summons. There they find the old Indian dead and Danielle under attack by men in battle armor. They are foiled by Karma, although in the battle, Danielle's pet mountain lion, Ridge-Runner, is killed.

In South America, another death occurs when Roberto's friend, Juliana, uses her body to protect her friend. She succeeds, but at the sacrifice of her own life. The men they're up against are cyborgs whose bodies were reconstructed after a vicious encounter once with the X-Men's Wolverine. Danielle uses this fact against them with the illusions she creates.

Ultimately the group confronts and defeats Donald Pierce, leaving him to be dealt with by the ones he betrayed—the Hellfire Club.

Sam Guthrie recognizes how he had been duped and 2 weeks later arrives at the mansion at Prof. X's inviation and is finally accepted by the other members of the New Mutants.



NOT ANOTHER X-MEN

In the first issue of **The New Mutants**, the story occurs at a time when the X-Men are missing and Prof. X has done some serious soul-searching regarding the wisdom of having a fighting team. When Roberto asks if they are to become the new X-Men (a logical question since they have all been given uniforms identical with those originally worn by the X-Men years before), Prof. X has a curt reply. "There will be a School for Gifted Youngsters — whose students are mutants — but never again will there be the X-Men, a team of mutant super heroes. That chapter of my life is ended forever."

But even though Prof. X was totally opposed to the youngsters becoming a fighting team, fate would take the choice out of his hands.

In issue 2, the team encounters the new Sentinels, a team built under a government contract issued to Sebastian Shaw of The Hellfire Club. Surprisingly, The New Mutants defeat the monstrous robots seemingly with greater ease than the X-Men have in the past when they confronted the mutant-hunting monstrosities.

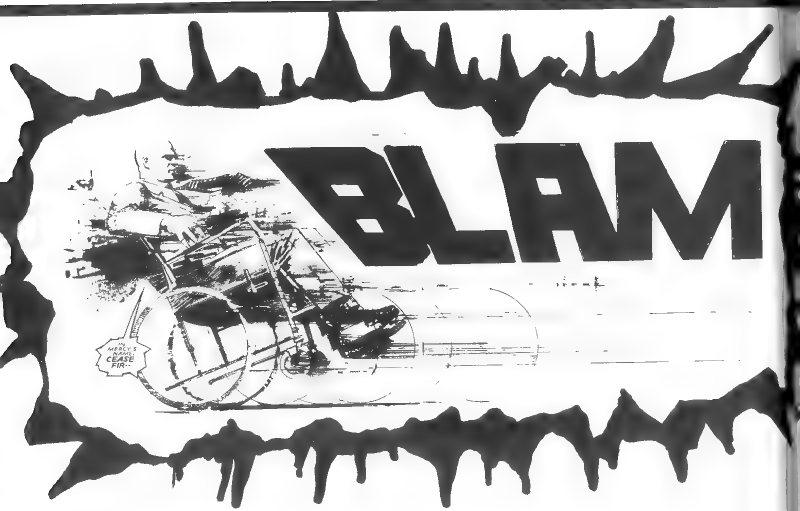
In issue 3, the alien Brood queen that's possessing Prof. X attacks the students, but they manage to drive it off. This story reaches its conclusion in **X-Men** 167 when the Brood is finally defeated. It then becomes apparent to Xavier that he had formed The New Mutants under the control of the Brood Queen as she was searching for genetically superior humans in which to implant her embryos.

"Who's Scaring Stevie?" in issue 4 is an unusual story and is far more effective for that reason. No super-villains here. No mutant hunters or threat from The Hell Fire Club, but just a threatening phone caller to a friend of the New Mutants, a caller who is revealed to be a boy their own age who is suffering from abuse at the hands of his parents. That abuse has warped him, but in the end he may have been found out in time.

In issue 6, the climax features an explosion in which Karma is apparently killed — but it takes place offstage. The cliffhanger has Prof. X losing mental contact with the New Mutants when an explosion is set off in the structure the group is in. Prof. X says that he has to get to California as quickly as possible for he fears that something terrible has happened. But issue 7 opens up with the aftermath, as the group feels dejected over the loss of Shan. How exactly did they lose her? One has the feeling that an issue was missed and it's only a couple issues later that Roberto has a flashback to Shan slipping from his hand and falling off a cliff into the sea — a scene no reader had seen before even though it involved the death of an original member of the team. But even though Shan is gone, she somehow turns up on the masthead of issues 8 and 9.

Issues 8-11 deal with an adventure in a lost city in South America. The odd part is it's peopled with descendants of Roman legionaires—in South America? The protracted story introduces a new young mutant, Magma, in issue 10. She joins Xavier's school in issue 13. Amara can absorb energy from the sun and transform it into power capable of manipulating tectonic forces. In other words she can cause earthquakes.

Illyana Rasputin, (the younger sister of Colossus) turns up in issue 14, fresh from her **Magic** mini-series, where she gained the powers of a demon sorceress. She too becomes one of the New Mutants, although the lines start getting pretty blurred when magic is regarded as a mutant power.



A NEW MUTANT LOOK

Readers got a screaming eyefull of the new artist on the title when Bill Sienkiewicz took over with issue 18. His powerful, often impressionistic approach to the rendering of the super hero gave the book an exciting new look. Even writer Chris Claremont seemed enervated by his new collaborator as the storylines began taking strange directions tailormade for Bill's highly individualistic style of art.

Issues 18-20 feature the "Demon Bear" saga, a rare and powerful story dealing with the bear that has haunted Danielle Moonstar's dreams since before she joined the New Mutants. Now the time comes for her to face this demonic creature — it almost costs her her life. This story is conceived and executed on the level of a graphic novel as it is excellent in both art and scripting. Claremont reveals a grasp for fantasy that far exceeds even his mastery of the super-hero style of storytelling. He explores the abstract nature of magic while Bill Sienkiewicz renders it with such arresting images that one can't help but be drawn deeper and deeper into the horrific world it portrays.

A subplot in that story leads to the introduction of Warlock (no connection with the late Adam Warlock), an alien who becomes the next, and strangest, member of the New Mutants. He's a shape-changer but the real nature of his being is rather difficult to get a handle on. Weird describes him pretty well. Damn weird. He looks somewhat like an explosion in the shape of a human body and only a couple artists, such as Art Adams, have been able to capture his essense as well as Sienkiewicz does. His unveiling on page 16 of issue 21 is pretty startling and it takes a few issues for the eye to get used to scanning his image just because it's so — alien. Truly alien.

Warlock is fleeing from his father, Magus, and the New Mutants drive the elder off, this time, and welcome the alien into their midst.

Since **The New Mutants** is written by the same author as **The X-Men**, Chris Claremont explores parallel storylines and has characters affecting both titles. The Hellfire Club is primary among these as we see changes developing there as well as the introduction of Selene, who would come to figure prominently in **X-Men** encounters.

Another example of this is that the aftermath of Magneto's near fatal encounter with the X-Men (in issue 150) is seen briefly in **New Mutants** 23.

THE ROSTER

The ranks of The New Mutants have swelled to nine members now, including Karma who was revealed to be alive in issue 31. Horribly deformed, she regained her true form mystically in **The New Mutants Special Edition No. 1** (1985).

Karma: Real name Xi'an Coy Manh, she can possess the mind of another person and control their body.

Wolfsbane: Rahne Sinclair, she is a shapechanger who can turn into a wolf or into a combination of a wolf and a girl.

Mirage: Danielle Moonstar first went by the code name Psyche became telepathic and can project a person's innermost thoughts and fears in the form of 3-D hallucinations.

Sunspot: Roberto Da Costa can absorb the energy of the sun and then release it as superhuman strength, the action causing his body and clothing to turn black in the process.

Cannonball: Can transform himself into a human battering ram who is largely invulnerable when using his power. Real name Sam Guthrie.

Magma: Amara Aquilla can tap into the tectonic forces of the earth, transforming her body into that of some volcanic entity.

Magik: Illyana Rasputin is the sister of Peter Rasputin (Colossus of The X-Men) who was held prisoner in another dimension where she became a master of demonic magic.

Warlock: An alien shapechanger who can literally change into anything. He is still learning how to fit in to human society on earth.

Cypher: Doug Ramsey is the newest member, whose ability is to instantly be able to decipher all codes and languages. He has an inferiority complex because his power is not action-oriented the way that the abilities of the others are.

NEW MUTANTS, OLD MUTANTS

Issue 32 deals with the surprising discovery of Karma, albeit in a virtually unrecognizeable form. In the recap of the events which transpired when she vanished, and was presumably killed, yet another version of the incident is told in which Sunspot falls into the sea with her and only then loses his grip on her.

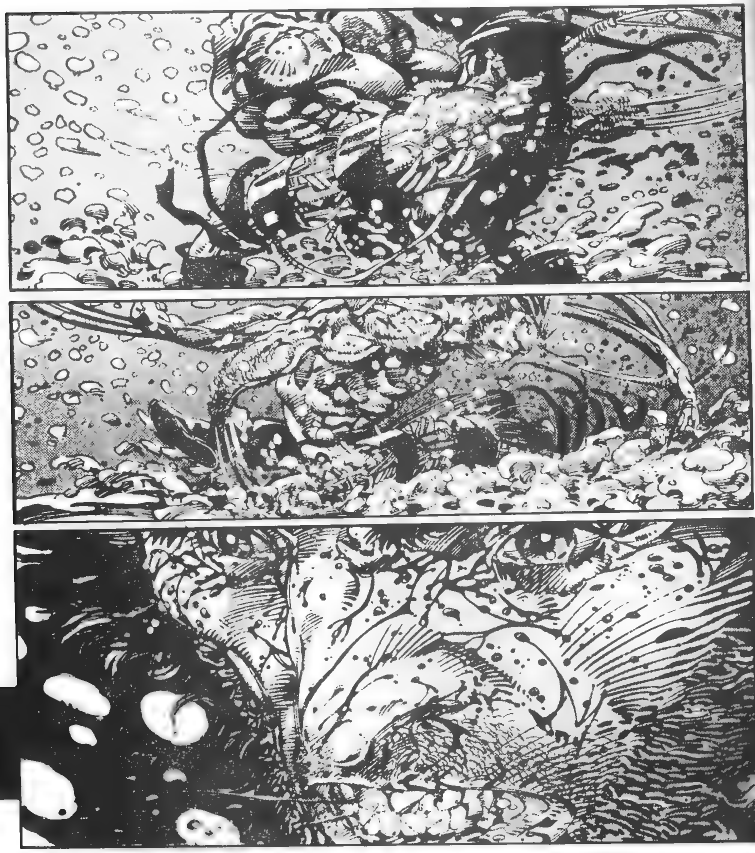
Finally in issue 34 it's revealed that Karma had been controlled by the astral form of Amahl Farouk, an evil mutant once defeated by Prof. X years before in Cairo. When he finally flees in defeat, Karma is left in a body huge and bloated by self-indulgence.

The New Mutants Special Edition No. 1 (which appeared in 1985 instead of an annual for that year) is actually a part of a larger story which deals with the X-Men and began in **X-Men/Alpha Flight** and concluded in **X-Men** annual 9. The main events in the **Special Edition** stand on their own and the 64 page issue stands as the single finest New Mutants tale to date and one of the best comics published in the past decade. Once again Claremont demonstrates a feel for dark fantasy which exceeds even his acknowledged expertise in handling superhero material.This is coupled with powerful pencilling by Arthur Adams, inking by Terry Austin and sensitive coloration by Christie Scheele. Adams displays a feel for drawing Warlock that is unexcelled. On pages 6 & 7 we see Warlock exploring the nature of swimming suits, including copying the bikini which Illya is wearing.

The organic circuitry of Warlock is brilliantly realized by Adams, such as in panel one on page 54 where Warlock's pointing finger is screaming and his throat has an exclamation point on it! Warlock's shapechanging even includes him becoming a Gumby clone on page 63. The issue has so much going for it that each character is given their moment in the sun — even Cypher who finally learns what it's like to be in the midst of a powerful battle. Instead of just being a long story in a giant-size format, this truly is a "special edition."

When the New Mutants return to earth and home in issue 35, they find that some changes have been rung down in their midst. As seen in **X-Men**, Prof. X has left and asked the now-reformed Magneto to take charge of his school and lead the New Mutants, an aspect of the continuity whose repercussions are still being felt to this day. The issue also features a scene which shows Magneto confronting some less than noble humans who had attacked one of his students, and he demonstrates what he can do and how fortunate the miscreants are that he is not the person he once was.

MARVEL'S MUTANT UNIVERSE



Mutants are big in comic books. But they are *only* big in comic books. Everyone who reads comic books knows what a mutant is. But outside of comics. Only the scientifically informed know what it means. Two different science fiction films were planning releases under the title **Mutant** but both changed them. Their research showed that the average person has no idea what a mutant is. The byword mutants are the rage of the comics world, an overnight success twenty-five years in the making!

Sci fi films have dealt with atomic muations since the Fifties. Marvel comics was born from the premise that not only didn't a little radiation ever hurt anyone but it in fact enhanced career opportunities. The Hulk owes his creation to Gamma Rays, the Fantastic Four to cosmic radiation bombardment and Spider-Man to the bite of a radioactive spider. But while these heroes are often referred to as being the result of atomic mutation, the X-Men were in fact the true Marvel mutants. They were born with their abilities, even if their powers did not manifest themselves for some years. Mutants possess one or more inherent characteristics not found in their parents. That is why Franklin Richards (the son of Reed and Sue Richards of the FF) is indeed a mutant while his parents are not.

When the original X-Men were created, the concept behind them was fresh (mutants secretly searching for other mutants) but the characters needed definition. Scott Summers (Cyclops) was introduced as "Slim" Summers. Prof. X was the brain of the group, a wheelchair-bound Reed Richards. The Beast was just another version of the Thing (until he was given an intellect and a wide vocabulary a couple issues later.) Ice Man's powers were the oppostie of the Human Torch, but his teenage personality was the same. Marvel Girl was a cutout patterned after the Invisible Girl. Marvel was ripping off their own previous success.

After a few issues they can be more clearly defined. A background in which the X-Men lived and fought was explored. This began to make them very different from the high profile FF. Magneto was obviously to the X-Men what Dr. Doom was to the FF, but he was unusual in his own way. More oddball mutants were introduced as was the concept of the Sentinels, the super robots who would return to bedevil the X-Men time after time.

The original **X-Men** climaxed on a high note in 1969 with issues 56-65. All but one of these was drawn by Neal Adams and Tom Palmer and written by Roy Thomas.

Nine months later the title returned but it only featured reprints from number 67 through 93. Then it didn't appear for three months. When it returned again it had new X-Men (picking up from **Giant Size X-Men 1** which was published in the interim between issues 93 and 94). This is when the modern age of Marvel Mutants began. With the forthcoming issues of **Classic X-Men**, all of the new fans of the series who missed those early days will be able to read enhanced reprints of the New X-Men beginning with their origin.

Which brings us up to today's **X-Men**, **New Mutants**, **Firestar**, **The Misfits** (a title change is planned for this one) and the controversial **X-Factor!**

THIS AIN'T NO BOLIDE-- EVEN SPACE ROCKS MOVE IN BALLISTIC TRAJECTORIES STRAIGHT LINES. THEY DON'T MAKE RIGHT ANGLE TURNS IN MIDFALL.
AN' THE IMPACT SHOULD'A TORN UP THE LAKE REAL BAD, LOONY AS IT SOUNDS AH'D
LEAST, PARTIALLY.
BIG CRITTER--'BOUT MY SIZE-- WATER'S BOILIN'AROUND IT. ATMOSPHERIC FRICTION
WHENEVER AH BLAST, ELSE AH WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO COME
LUNGS'RE GETTIN' BETTER HAUL MY ASHORE

BACK AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME:
THE CLASSIC X-MEN

One of the biggest announcements of the year is the planned open-ended reprint series featuring the new X-Men as well as new backup material.

"The first issue will cover **Giant Size** number one but will only reprint 13 pages of it," Claremont reveals. "The bulk of the first issue will explore what happened on the night between the end of **Giant-Size X-Men 1** and **X-Men** 94. Why did some of the original X-Men decide to leave? Why did the new ones decide to stay? There were things hinted at in 94 that we never got around to exploring."

"In **Classic** 2 we'll be showing the beginning of the friendship between Storm and Jean Grey, which we alluded to in **X-Men** 100.

"Tentatively for issue 3 we're covering the burial of Thunderbird — who he was and why he did what he did.

"It can relate to something happening in the story or it could relate to something happening in a parallel time stream, setting up the New Mutants or where the Star Jammers came from. The backup is essentially whatever we want to make of it that will add to the published accounts."

Strong fan demand is expected for this book featuring the most popular characters in the comic book world today. The monthly series will begin appearing this summer.

THEN CAME —
THE NEW MUTANTS

The New Mutants appeared first in a graphic novel written by Chris Claremont which led immediately into their own regular series. The New Mutants are teenagers who operate independently of the X-Men even though both work under the supervision of Magneto.

In **Secret Wars II**, an intensely dramatic occurance had a different effect on the two mutant groups. For a time most of The New Mutants ceased to exist! The way the two groups reacted to the Beyonder and how he made them perceive reality points up the emotional and philosophical differences between the two groups. **The New Mutants** is composed essentially of children whose worldview is not as tempered by hardening experiences as that of the X-Men.

"In the comic book world, where people are destroyed and resurrected with appalling frequency, we're trying to deal with the repercussions," Ann Nocenti explains, "What we did was sit down and try to figure out how you'd feel if such a thing were to happen. We started with throwing them into shock. It's not something that anyone's world view can accept. I cannot accept that a teenager could accept the reality of dying and being resurrected. They'd have to put what they went through into their subconscious as if it didn't happen.

"We took each character and used the situation to analyze how they would have dealt with it," Nocenti continues. "We dealt with how Bobby wasn't even called — wasn't even a part of it, and that's going to have repercussions. He can no longer go through day-to-day existence without knowing that this horrible thing can happen. He became obsessed with the idea. Some of the others were able to say, 'Well, just another adventure!'"

The X-Men dealt with the existence of the Beyonder differently.

"Storm is a fairly evolved creature. She's close to a force of nature, or was at one point," Nocenti adds. "She's evolved enough that she can deal with the concept of The Beyonder. Wolverine's tough enough, Kitty may still be young enough to deal with it. The only X-Man who really freaked out was Nightcrawler because he believes in the Christian god. It's like the rug was pulled out from under his reality."

As the writer of both **X-Men** and **New Mutants**, Chris Claremont was able to handle how each group member individually dealt with the aftermath of the Beyonder. Since **The New Mutants** were the more profoundly affected, it has been dealt with more in their book.

"The next few issues deal quite extensively with it," Claremont states. "The final issue of the White Queen

LATER
NO LUCK TRACKIN' DOWN MAGNETO. AH KNOW IT'S HIS PLACE TO NOTIFY BOBBY'S FOLKS. BUT DOES ANYONE THINK AH OUGHTA ?
LEAVE IT TILL MORNING, SAM.
IT'S MY FAULT
I KILLED HIM
THEY DO NOT LOVE HER NOW

trilogy wraps up the immediate repercussions. There's also a Mirage solo story which relates to it. It's an aspect of their lives that will be a part of them. It won't be a pre-eminent part once we get past the main storyline. By the same token, it is an aspect that will never be far away. They'll always be aware of it. It'll affect them in small ways, subconsciously. it might become a big deal depending on the demands of the story."

Plans are already afoot for the anniversary in issue 50. This will be the climactic tale of Warlock which previous stories have been leading up to.

"This is tentatively set as the final, major confrontation between Warlock and his father, which will possibly be preceded by a chase through time and space," Claremont reveals. "There will be an interesting number of adventures along the way."

On the flipside, editor Ann Nocenti states that **The New Mutants** will reflect the fact that this is a group of young teenagers, not adventurous adults.

"They are going to become more what their real ages are and what their real experiences are, says Nocenti. "You'll be seeing a lot more stories like 'Slumber Party' where the adventure of the action of the story is going to be born out of something kids actually do. It's a little strange to have them continually off on huge adventures. We'll leave that kind of thing to the X-Men."

NEW, YET OLD: X-FACTOR

Ann Nocenti is not the editor of **X-Factor**. But in her position as editor of **X-Men** and **New Mutants** she was crucial in the complicated strategy necessary to launch such an ambitious reworking of the original X-Men.

"There was a certain amount of coordination needed to create a viable environment for Cyclops to leave the X-Men," she cites as just one example of the complicated elements involved. "**X-Factor** needs to establish an identity of its own — a good, solid reason for being. Once it does that, the two groups will become aware of each other. Right now all that the X-Men know is that there's this thing called X-Factor. they don't necessarily know that it's where Scott went. Even if they were to see some publicity for it, they would see that it's Scott and a redhead and think it's Scott and Madeline. They don't know that Madeline's disappeared. We're working on how we're going to build the crossover."

"The X-Men will discover Jean's resurrection," Claremont says, hinting at story possibilities. "There will be all manner of repercussions that Louise (Jones) and I are going to build to. We're not going to just jump right into it." This is because a complicated game plan is being worked out for drawing the two groups together.

"Louise and I are talking about starting a mutant gang war. This is to say that we are each creating an evil mutant mastermind and coming up with characters with similar themes to them so that the titles will turn coincidence to our advantage. For the last few years, I've been dealing with mutant paranoia. Human beings are terrified of mutants who might try to take over the world. Now we're going to introduce mutants who are actually to do just that. If you want an analogy, what we have is a 1930 Warner Brothers crime film. Louise in **X-Factor** has the James Cagney gang and I in **X-Men** have the Humphrey Bogart gang. Magneto is going to be Pat O'Brien caught in the middle. I can't speak for Louise, but as far as the X-Men go, I plan to make this gang war as bloody as the real thing."

Although well-received by the fans, **X-Factor** has had a rocky time from the start. Bob Layton, one of the creators of the X-Factor concept and who was heavily involved with the writing, has been replaced by Louise Jones (recognized for her excellent work writing **Power Pack** and former editor of the mutant books). There was reportedly some behind-the-scenes dissension over revival of Jean Grey. When Dark Phoenix died, many hoped that this would not be just another typical comic book death, one where the character would be revived by some contrived means a few years later. As ingenious as the return of Jean Grey was, some felt that it was just business as usual in the unreal comic book world.

Chris Claremont was reportedly less than thrilled with **X-Factor** initially, but he has recognized the story potential available with the new team. And he is carefully working out an X-Men meets X-Factor plotline.

In the near future, Scott will tell Jean about his wife. She's not going to be very happy about it!

THEY'RE MISFITS — THE FALLEN ANGELS

The six issue **Fallen Angels** miniseries (formerly known as **The Misfits**) by Jo Duffy, Kerry Gammill and Tom Palmer is being writen and drawn for a projected fall release. Complications have arisen over calling the book **The Misfits** resulting in the change of name to **Fallen Angels**.

"The basic premise of the series," says Jo Duffy, "is that being a mutant is like being an adolescent. You hit a point in your life when your body starts changing on you in ways you never expected and you're convinced that there's nobody in the world who's ever been like you. I figured that being a mutant and an adolescent simultaneously is sort of like psychological double-jeopardy. It's a very funny age but also an age when you take yourself much more seriously than is warranted."

The team will be Sunspot, Warlock, Madox (the multiplying man), Siren and some ancillary mutant characters.

"Warlock is a very touching character, but he's also an

intrinsically silly character. These characters have got a capacity both for drama and silliness that I don't think has ever been fully explored by anybody. I wanted to give these people with all this rich story potential a chance to be stars for awhile."

The events in the mini-series will be reflected in the **New Mutants** as it will involve Sunspot and Warlock leaving the group for a time. THis is when they encounter the Vanisher and an array of other characters, some a bit surprising.

"The Vanisher, because he has such a record of cowardice and incompetence," Duffy explains, "can no longer get an adult mutant to work with him. He has set himself up as a kind of Fagin for runaway gifted youngsters. We're creating two new characters for the series and also including Devil Dinosaur, Moon Boy and possibly The Impossible Man. There's going to be a travel motif in the story, but whether it will be time, space or dimensional travel, the story will determine."

The two new characters are both female. The first, named Chance is a latent mutant who doesn't know what her abilities are yet and she's a Korean juvenile delinquent. The other new character is named Ariel. She has space-bridging abilities and a mutant power that she's had all her life but is unaware is a mutation. She is an alien but this aspect has no connection with the fact that Warlock is also alien to this planet.

"It will be a very dark tone and light tone series," Duffy states. "I think it works best to have light and dark running alongside each other. It's going to get a lot like Shakespeare's **Twelfth Night** in that people have problems they take incredibly seriously only because they lack perspective. Unless it's an actual death or a tragedy, anything taken very seriously has a humorous side when viewed in perspective. The characters will not find the goings-on at all funny, but I hope sometimes that the audience does.

"Sunspot and Warlock are two of my favorite characters. Warlock is a toy that everybody wants to play with," says Duffy. "He epitomizes what I was talking about. The other characters are there because I was looking for a balanced team — the kind of odd duck characters who'd never had this kind of exposure and I thought might work here."

BORN ON TV—FIRESTAR

Even newer to the world of Marvel's mutants is **Firestar**, who just finished appearing in her own four-part mini-series. Written by Tom DeFalco and drawn by Mary Wilshire, this has a different slant than other Marvel titles have taken in recent years.

"Tom DeFalco came up with the idea of doing a **Firestar** mini-series based on the character who has appeared in *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* on tv," explains Wilshire. "It was something that we actually thought up a year or two ago because I expressed an interest in doing comics that would appeal more directly to little girls. We're trying to get more little girls into the readership.

"We decided that we wanted to make a story about a girl's — any girl's — struggle to grow up. Adolescence is enormously difficult. It just kind of happened that it started with this interaction between the young girl and her grandmother—trying to make her not be so afraid of her first day of school by telling her that she has a special mark on her hand. Of course it's a mark that everybody has! That's part of the gimmick, too. We want to involve everybody and have them think that maybe they're special. On the most universal level, I believe that that's the real significance of storytelling. I didn't grow up reading comic books and so my first obsession is not with comic books per se but with drawing people and telling stories — wherever there's a story that really involves peoples' emotion."

OTHER X—PROJECTS

It's been over two years since the first and only **X-Men** graphic novel appeared. It was so special and powerful that fans have been eagerly awaiting another. A second one is now in the works. to be written by Chris Claremont and painted by John Bolton. Claremont explains that he didn't want to do another graphic novel until he had just the right story for it.

"It took me the better part of three and a half years to come up with the first one. The only problem with a story as good as that one is that you want to come up with another that will be at least its equal. Anyone can do a 64 page issue of the **X-Men**. I've done it myself. The problem is to do a story in a 64 or 80 page format that justifies the six dollar price and that stands alone as a special, almost unique sort of story which could be done in this format but not in the regular book. You want very much to give the readers value for their money. Doing a story which is basically a glorified regular issue doesn't fit my criterion."

There is also a Rachel/Phoenix mini-series in the works to be written by Claremont and drawn by Rick Leonardi. In describing it, Ann Nocenti states, "It will be the odyssey of Rachel. We're going to find out who she is — strip her down, build her up and make her really into a phoenix that rises out of ashes and is a sole survivor of everything. Her origin has been confusion with the alternate timeline and all that."

Barry Smith and Chris Claremont have also been talking about doing a Storm mini-series, which Smith will be working on instead of doing occasional issues of **The X-Men**.

Besides the already discussed **X-Men** annual drawn by Art Adams, there will be a **New Mutants** annual. "It's being done by Alan Davis," informs Ann Nocenti. "Chris has taken characters from the **Longshot** stories for that. The annuals are where we can cut loose and do stories we normally wouldn't do in the regular book."

The complicated mutant world at Marvel Comics has practically become a universe unto itself, populated with characters, crossovers and interaction. To X-fans, it's a dream come true!

ALPHA FLIGHT — CANADA'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

The Super Hero was born in America half a century ago. He has tended to be bred here ever since. But in recent years people have the revolutionary notion that since super villains rise in other nations, so probably do super good guys! Weak attempts have been made in this direction. But none with any success until Marvel's Alpha Flight. Perhaps it took the influence of Canadian John Byrne to create a team of Canadian superheroes.

The characters were first chronicled during Byrne's stint on **X-Men**. Vindicator appeared in issue 109 as Weapon Alpha. He returned in issues 120&121 bringing along the entire Alpha Flight team of Northstar, Shaman, Snowbird, Sasquatch and Aurora. Puck, Marrina and Talisman were later added in the regular **Alpha Flight** comic.

While Byrne created Alpha Flight, details of their background and makeup were added by Chris Claremont during their appearances in **X-Men** 120, 121, 139 and 140. Byrne didn't agree with some of the personality traits that Claremont added. When Claremont wouldn't alter them, Byrne refused to allow Alpha Flight to appear in the **X-Men.** This led to Byrne's creation of the **Alpha Flight** comic. He intended to handle the group differently from the usual team in that the close-knit unit described in **X-Men** 120&121 was actually fragmented and wracked by internal conflicts. Before **Alpha Flight** was a reality, Byrne had talked of some day doing such a book and including Wolverine since the character had become so strongly linked to the Alphans. He joked that he'd like to use the character if Chris Claremont would ever let him go. The fact that Wolverine only appeared in a dream sequence in issue 13 and in a cameo surrounding an **X-Man** reprint in issue 17 tends to indicate that Claremont would indeed not release the character from his committment to the X-Men.

Despite the fact that **Alpha Flight** was a title featuring characters that he had created and developed, Byrne realized after two years that it was an experiment which was not entirely working out to his satisfaction. He began to long for new and different challenges. This is when Bill Mantlo, who was scripting the Hulk, entered the picture.

BILL MANTLO — CREATING A NEW DIRECTION

"John Byrne called me out of the blue and asked me how I would feel about writing **Alpha Flight**," Mantlo recalls. "I thought he was joking because it was a book he'd created. But he said that he was tired of it and felt that he had run the gamut of things he could do with it. Plus he'd always wanted to draw the Hulk and his nostalgic desire was to go back to the old Kirby/Ditko days. I had pretty much run the gamut ont he Hulk and so it sounded incredible. I jumped at the chance because I loved his characters and it seemed the perfect time for both of us to move on to things we really liked to do instead of treading water and possibly hurting books which we'd both done for quite awhile. So we switched."

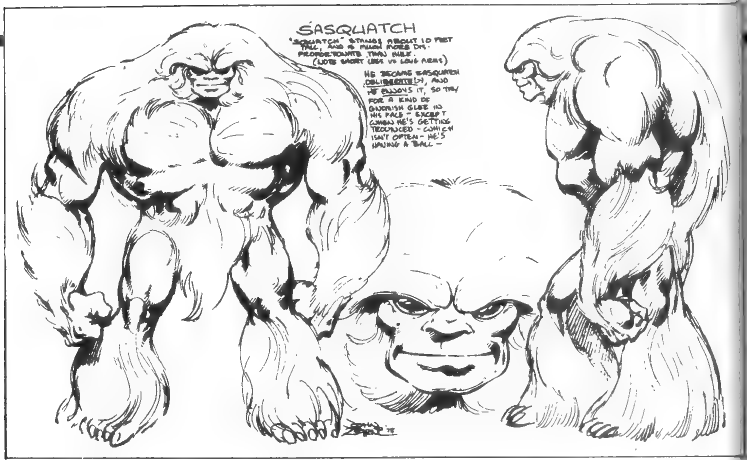
The switchover was complete and included the editorial side of each book as well so that Carl Potts, who had been editing **The Hulk**, became the editor of **Alpha Flight** instead. Mike Mignola, who had been drawing **The Hulk**, only remained with **Alpha Flight** for three issues, but following three fill-ins, the title has now stabilized with David Ross as the regular artist.

"We think the switchover worked out pretty well and I'm excited as hell about it," Mantlo adds.

The first thing Mantlo did was change the focus of the book. Bill recognizes that his own view of the team is decidedly different from that of the book's creator.

"I think that John, after coming off the X-Men, was determined to do a book which was diametrically opposed to what he had done with Chris. **Alpha Flight** was a non-team book in that John took a group of disparate individuals who didn't necessarily like each other and then hurled them at each other's throats to see what the chemistry would create. While his stories were tremendous, I believe he got lost somewhere along the line in that he completely forgot that Alpha Flight was supposed to be a team. As individual characters they were all interesting, but there was no glue holding them together. John would be the first to admit this.

THERE'S THE CREEP I TOLD YOU ABOUT!
ONLY NOW HE'S GOT A COSTUME AND A GIRLFRIEND!
AND AURORA, I'LL BET!
FROM WHAT WE'VE SEEN OF THEIR POWERS SO FAR, WE'D BETTER BRACE OURSELVES FOR A BATTLE, ALPHA FLIGHT!


SASQUATCH
"SASQUATCH" STANDS ABOUT 10 FEET TALL, AND IS MUCH MORE DIS-PROPORTIONATE THAN BIGFOOT. (LOOK SHORT LEGS VS LONG ARMS)
HIS BECOMING SASQUATCH CALLIBERATION, AND HE ENJOYS IT, SO TRY FOR A KIND OF GOOFISH GLEE IN HIS FACE - EXCEPT WHEN HE'S GETTING TECHNICAL - COMICH THAT OFTEN - HE'S HAVING A BALL -

"My first instinct was to pull them all back together as a team. There clearly was a basis for a team in that American comics are extremely chauvinistic but Canada has proven itself, through John Byrne, capable fo producing heroes. Those heroes should be recognized as a force within the country. I used that as a springboard to put the team back together. Despite their differences, they're capable of living and functioning together." While Mantlo will still explore the differences in the characters, it will be in the context of the team. Some stories will feature one character more prominently, but it will be as part of the team ninety percent of the time.

In order to accomplish this, Mantlo had to take stock of the group to determine its new directions.

"Sasquatch has gone to the great beyond. Whether he stays there or not I have yet to determine. But with him gone I'm going to have to deal with Aurora's grief and with what his absence means to both Aurora and Northstar. I've dropped hints in the book that both of them were equally grief-striken. Now that they find that they have more in common than they thought, they can no longer come together. If they touch, they negate each other's powers. This is a direct result of Aurora's misunderstanding of Northstar's motivation for keeping her away from Sasquatch. She altered her biochemistry completely so that the twins are no longer twins in terms of power. Because of Langkowski's experimentation on Aurora, they cancel each other out. Now that they're closer than ever, they're farther apart than before. We're going to try to bring them to at least a psychic raproachmont, but for the present they cannot hug or make any contact with each other."

Tying in with Alpha Flight's last appearance in **X-Men** 140, the first issue of the book in 1983 portrayed the team being disbanded by the Canadian government only to reteam as a private organization. Mantlo has brought the group back into the fold as the government has seen the error of its ways and recognized the incredible potential of having a team of super heroes as part of the national defense structure.

"But Alpha Flight is going to find out that even though they were guaranteed that there would be no strings attached, there are strings. There will be a lot of bad blood between them and Ottawa and a new understanding will have to be carved out. But essentially they are Canada's super team. They are loyal to and desirous of protecting their nation. But they are by no means servants or agents of the Canadian government. That's something that the government may find hard to swallow even as it desires super heroes as part of its defense position. This may also pit them against the government in that the government wants to know if there are more of these beings. If there are, can they trust them? And if they can't, can they control them? Questions along those lines will be raised. I hope to deal more and more with the Canadian political climate in a more realistic sense. The only time that it has ever been dealt with at all meaningfully or fairly was back in the Chris Claremont/John Byrne **X-Men** when they had Trudeau pop up.

"Canada has second nation status, which I think we'll be addressing. This means that Alpha Flight is a second rate super team. We'll be addressing those questions as well as things like whether Canada really needs this defense program and this super team."

Inextricably linked with Alpha Flight is one ex-member who was around before the team was even fully formed — Wolverine.

"He was originally part of Dept. H and there will be major revelations in **Alpha Flight** 33 and 34 when Wolverine encounters Heather again," Mantlo reveals. "These are revelations about his past, about his relationship with James MacDonald Hudson and Heather. This will bridge over into an X-Men story which Chris Claremont and Barry Smith are doing. Clearly he's going to have to appear and reappear in the title because of his relationship with Heather and because of what he learns about his background from her. It will be necessary for him to either come into contact or conflict with Alpha Flight again."

There are some things about Alpha Flight which won't be changing immediately though.

"In my first string of issues," Mantlo states, "the villains are all indigenous Alpha Flight villains, like Deadly Earnest. I'm creating several new villains and sub-characters and I may create a whole new team to first battle Alpha Flight and then learn from their example as to how to be heroes. Then I'll have them come into contact with classic Marvel villains, but only to illustrate points about who Alpha Flight is and what their relationship with Canada is.

"Although I don't want to continue being parochial, the biggest impediment to having the team branch out was always Snowbird who couldn't leave Canada because she was bound to the land. That will be resolved by issue 39 so that they can travel all over the world and become an international super team just as other Marvel teams are. They will then start to get a greater awareness of their role in the world and how to act in that role."

ARTIST DAVID ROSS—THE NEW VISION

Artist Mike Mignola switched to **Alpha Flight** along with the rest of **Hulk**'s creative team. But he found it necessary to leave after only three issues (although he still has a connection to the book in that he is working on the Alpha Flight graphic novel.)

David Ross is a newcomer. His first regular assignment is drawing **Alpha Flight** and he plans to stick with the title for quite awhile. His previous professional work includes the Binary story recently published in **Marvel Fanfare** 24, last summer's **Batman and the Outsiders** annual and DC's **Star Trek** annual. Ross states that it's just a coincidence that he is a Canadian artist drawing a comic book featuring a Canadian super team. Since he was inheriting a series which was established by John Byrne (yet another Canadian artist), Ross consulted with him on certain elements of the series.

"I had a short talk with him about the fine points of the designs he had done, not for the characters but for the surroundings of the mansion and things like that. I'm trying to keep things familiar to the readers. I've been looking at the material that John did an awful lot, but I don't think that I draw anything like John," Ross states.

In describing Ross' work on **Alpha Flight**, Bill Mantlo says, "He's constantly creating and innovating and it's inspirational working with somebody like that because he just doesn't stop thinking. The drawing is impeccable and the two of us seem to have clicked perfectly. I'm real excited! It's been a long time since I've worked with people like that."

Editor Carl Potts echoes Mantlo's praise and states, "He's very good, very intelligent and very into his work. He thinks constantly, asks all the right questions and is becoming a real good storyteller. I have a lot of high hopes for him."

Ross demonstrates his involvement with the series when he tries to explore the facets of Alpha Flight which have never been examined.

"There were some things about the characters that were never worked out," Ross observes, "and which John kept us in the dark about. I was talking with Bill Mantlo about this because I was curious about what sort of things these characters would do in their spare time. What sort of music do they listen to? What do they like to do for hobbies? Are some of them sports-minded or more inclined to sit down and read a book? Things to fill out their character and give a more rounded sense to their personality."

Ross is studying classic Marvel team books to see how they achieved balance in illustration.

"I look at a lot of John Buscema books to see how he dealt with having a lot of characters running around and not having the pages look cluttered. There seems to be a real art to that. There's a tendency by a lot of today's artists to end up with a cluttered look. Perhaps you see this because there's so much being called for. If there's a lot of characters in the group, maybe a writer isn't thinking as visually as he could and is specifically calling for a lot of shots with characters in them — one on top of the other. I think that any artist has to go through that and make the changes which are required to make it flow visually. I have to simplify now and then if there are a lot of characters—I have to decide if it's really necessary to show all of the Alphans in that situation or maybe just show bits and pieces of them instead of full figures. Just enough to let people know that they're there without having to clutter panels. So I tend to try to keep it a little simpler."

David Ross has had a keen interest in the art of John Byrne ever since he first saw it back in the early days of **Iron Fist**. He recognizes a difference between Alpha Flight as they were back in **X-Men** 120 and as they appeared in their own title.

"The biggest difference I can see is that in that X-Men story, they were treated as a very cohesive team who didn't seem to have any problems. I remember when Wolverine couldn't understand why the X-Men were falling apart

against Alpha Flight after they'd taken on such heavy duty villains. Shaman remarks: 'The problem is teamwork. We have it, you don't.' Then as soon as Alpha gets their own book, they are the very antithesis of this working together in harmony. That's really the major difference I've noticed between their appearance in the **X-Men** and their later appearances.

"It's interesting to see characters evolve," Ross continues. "Aurora was the standard wine glass-shaped full-figure girl and Northstar was a little beefier. They both became very lean in the regular book. The group is also very different than it started out to be as we've had the introduction of Marinna and Puck. Puck has had a very strong bearing on the character of Alpha Flight. I think of him as being a very important character. Not just in terms of what he does in the stories, but also in the general feel of the group."

Gone from the group is Sasquatch. Just like many other fans, David Ross misses him.

"From a visual standpoint and a character standpoint, he will be sorely missed. If there is some way in the future that he can be brought back, then we may very well do that. Nothing has been worked out at this point, but I think that's what both Bill and I would like to see happen. It's just a matter of finding the right kind of story that would be interesting and would hold up in terms of what has gone before. I'd love to see Sasquatch return."

Bill Mantlo welcomes creative input from the artists he works with. Sometime after issue 39, the plots will reflect ideas that Ross has brought to the book.

"What I'm working on now is a lot of stuff he worked on and developed when Mike Mignola was on the book. We'll soon be getting into the material that 'I've had a little more input on."

EDITOR CARL POTTS — OVERSEEING THE FUTURE

Carl Potts began his association with Marvel as an artist. Head editor Jim Shooter recognized his managerial skills and asked him to edit. Although Potts hopes to return to drawing one day, he greatly enjoys editing comics.

Team books tend to be complicated, especially when they contain characters as disparate as the members of Alpha Flight. But Potts has taken to this series and welcomes the opportunity to discuss the unusual and exciting things in store for the coming months.

"Issues 33 and 34 are a two-part story where Heather flies south to meet with Wolverine. She gets involved in a situation with him where we learn a lot about Wolverine's past. This involves how Mac Hudson found Wolverine in the first place and how Heather initially reacted to that. There'll also be a new villainess named Lady Deathstrike," Potts reveals, "who claims that she owns the admantium skeleton that's inside Wolverine and wants to reclaim it."

Issue 35 begins the supblots which will lead up to Alpha Flight/Avengers crossover a few issues down the line.

"This story is titled 'The Child is Father to the Man.' Some of the setup will be in Atlantis where Attuma has captured Marrina and is torturing her, trying to show the people of Atlantis what sort of monster it was that their former ruler wanted to marry. This also features the pilgrimage of Shaman to regain his mystic powers. He must go through a mystical gauntlet and learn about himself and his relationship to his magic and his people.

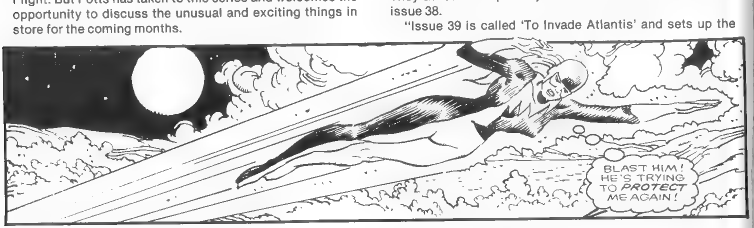
"Issue 36 is called 'Labor Pains.' Snowbird is pregnant by her Mounty husband and this strange combination of heritages is causing weird complications. Also, in this issue, the Sub-Mariner's cousin, Prince Byrrah, leaves Atlantis to tell Namor that Marrina has been captured. Shaman calls on Dr. Strange to help him locate the best mystical spot for Snowbird to deliver her baby.

"Issue 37 is called 'Deathbird' and will feature a new villain, Pestilence, who is a survivor of an old whaling ship from the last century who was frozen alive. He has come into contact with certain mystical powers and is secretly manipulating the events around the birth of Snowbird's baby so that his lifeforce can inhabit the baby and corrupt it. We set up the introduction of Pestilence in this issue but don't actually see him try to corrupt the birth until issue 38. Also in 37, Talisman comes to berate her father, Shaman, and show off how her powers are so much stronger than his are. She is also still berating him for allowing her to be lost in the world of his pouch in an earlier issue.

"Issue 38, titled "Pestilence," marks the climax of the sequence involving the birth of Snowbird's child.

"It turns out that Talisman was unwittingly aiding Pestilence," Potts reveals, "and Pestilence really rakes Alpha Flight over the coals at the birthplace of Snowbird's baby. Shaman has to decide if he should take the responsibility of permanently becoming the Talisman himself. They at least temporarily defeat Pestilence at the end of issue 38.

"Issue 39 is called 'To Invade Atlantis' and sets up the



crossover with the Avengers." While Namor rescues Marrina in this crossover, the events prove to be a set up for even more major events which will come to pass later in 1986 in the **Alpha Flight** graphic novel.

What kept coming up while talking with the writer, the artist and the editor of **Alpha Flight** is the absence of Sasquatch. Is this very popular character truly dead and gone?

"He's as dead as any character can be in comic books," Potts states. "I'm always reluctant to say that something is absolutely, positively certain. For all I know, someone will come up with a great idea for a revival down the line that we'll be convinced is worth doing. He was very popular which does make him attractive to return."

If there is one thing which **Alpha Flight** became known for over the past couple of years, it is that it played against expectation and used the unexpected to shape its storylines. This involved the death of the Vindicator, his seeming return and the shocking revelation surrounding that as well as the fate of Sasquatch.

But Alpha Flight seems to be making definite changes in direction under the new creative team. It is no longer a self-destructive team being pulled apart from within. Rather, the group has realigned and refocused its priorities, putting the old differences behind them to face the new and greater challenges ahead. **Alpha Flight** remains a very unusual book nonetheless, indulging in mysticism and weird fantasy as much as in the traditional realms of the superhero. This combination cannot help but continue to produce surprises.

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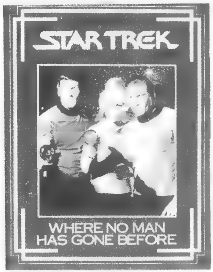

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At the beginning of the first Marvel Age of Comics, it seemed like most superheroes were coming into being via that wonder of the Atomic Age — radiation! This faithful plot device had given birth to The Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, The Hulk and even Daredevil. But in 1963 a new breed of atomic hero was ushered in, one who had not been directly exposed to atomics themselves but were the result of mutated genes. Thus was born the first Mutant Age of comics.

When The X-Men first appeared in 1963, they were moderately successful but failed to live up to the popularity of The Fantastic Four or even of The Avengers, another team book which was born in the same month as The X-Men and which, unlike The X-Men, has continued its run uninterrupted to this day. By the late Sixties, The X-Men were showing signs of wear and finished out the decade as a reprint book. There it seemed to end.

But then came the Seventies! New young artists and writers, influenced and inspired by what Lee and Kirby had been doing a decade earlier, came up with a way to revive The X-Men and infuse it with new vigor and new characters. Along came Nightcrawler, Colossus and Wolverine and soon Marvel Girl became Phoenix (and who knew where that would lead?). The New X-Men weren't so much students at a school as they were people rescued from a reality where those with super powers were feared and hated, especially if they looked like Nightcrawler!

Finding mutants in trouble and bringing them to a safe haven became the premise of The New Mutants, who were established as a time when Prof. X believed The X-Men to have been killed. These new mutants were all much younger than The X-Men were when we first met them in 1963 and although Prof. X had vowed that they would not become a fighting team, events would soon take this decision out of his hands. The New Mutants showed that there was still a lot of freshness in the idea and the book has become just as strong in its own right as The X-Men is, and without needing to ride on the other's coattails.

But a lot of books did appear which depending on riding piggyback with The X-Men (X-Men/Micronauts, X-Men/Alpha Flight) and since that could only go on so long it was inevitable that a third mutant book would be born — X-Factor, and that one, created without the guiding hand of Chris Claremont, has had more than its share of problems, but that's a story in itself!

This volume chronicles the continuing expanding mutant universe and its impact on comics as a whole. Enjoy!

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